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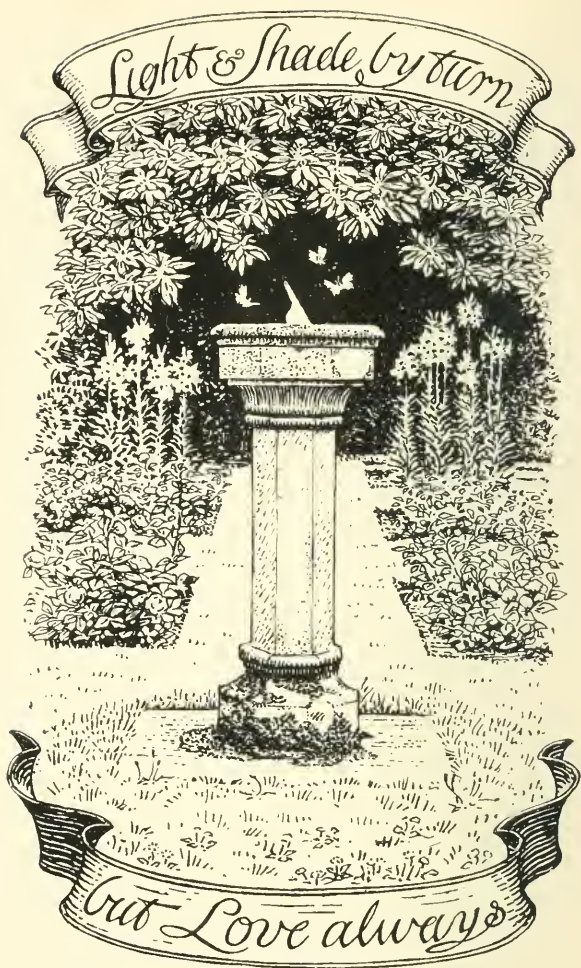
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Mr. Brandreth
With best wishes
from L.P.

Thomas
1898.





IN THE
GARDEN of PEACE
by
HELEN MILMAN
(Mrs. Caldwell Croston)
Illustrated by
EDMUND H. NEW



JOHN LANE, The Bod-
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& NEW YORK, 1896

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To my Sister

ISABELLA FRANCES WESTON

✻ ✻ ✻ ✻

*As I sit in my rose-garden by the old sun-dial, and listen to
the cooing of the doves in the verandah and the restful
fall of the weir at the foot of the sandy lane, I bid
the sunshine and the birds and the moving
shadows bear a message to you in your
beautiful garden, for I know that
you will lovingly welcome the
thoughts that have been
nurtured in the
Garden of
Peace*

*Heathfield
August 25th*

H. C.

866172

“My garden invites into it all the birds of the country, by offering them the conveniency of springs and shades, solitude and shelter; I do not suffer any one to destroy their nests in the Spring. By this means I have always the music of the season in its perfection.”

ADDISON.

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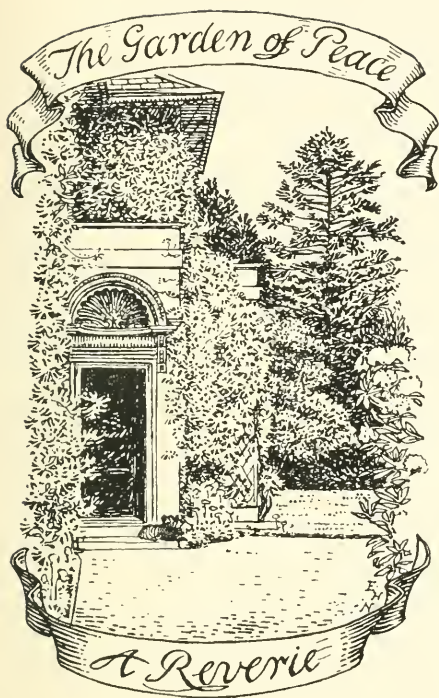
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“ The true charm of Natural History must be in the mind of the person who seeks information at the hand of Nature ; and no words can ever describe the never ceasing, ever varying delight that such a mind is susceptible of when able to appreciate the wonderful works of the Creator as seen in the least of His creatures, or the tiniest flower that grows at our feet.”

R. T. K. L.

A REVERIE

It was on a dull, dreary day that we happened upon the Garden of Peace; rain-drops dripped from the trees, in a world of harmonious grey. But what mattered the colour of clouds, when the sunshine in our hearts found a rainbow in every storm, when love shone through every shower? The lawn sloped from the house down into the wood, and a Spanish chestnut spread its arms on one side over the grass by a pinsapo and Douglas fir. There were banks of rhododendrons, and an Austrian pine near a heather bed, where the white St. Dabeac grew in profusion. Passing along the verandah and under an arch of Portugal laurel, we came to a little rosary with an old world sun-dial in the centre. It was the sun-dial which sealed our fate; though—who knows?—our home had been marked in the heaven chart for ages upon ages. It was only a glance, yet our hearts took root in a moment, and even

A Reverie

the giant neglect did not thwart us. It was only an illustration of the lines written hundreds of years ago :

*" Gardens of old, nor art, nor rules obey'd,
But unadorn'd a wild neglect betray'd ;
Roses confus'dly spread were often found
Blushing to mix with weeds, nor was the ground
Roll'd into walks, nor graced with box around."*

A rockery bordered one side of the rosary, with barberries and snowy mespilus trees in the background, and banks of spiraeas, syringas, laburnums, and hollies, with a white acacia tree towering above the rest. And the house? It was enough that it was trellised and covered with creepers ; we gave it hardly a glance, for we looked into the garden, and beyond the garden down into the valley, and to the fir woods, where a glint of pale larch green and rose-tints told us the news that Spring was coming, and that the earth was awakening from her sleep. We listened to the birds, and they gave us welcome.

Later in the day we met the Sage and said to him, " We have found our home, we have found the Garden of Peace."

" But the house?" answered the Sage ; " you must not be carried away by an idea, the house is the important factor in life."

A Reverie

"The house," we answered, a certain feeling of guilt creeping over us. "We did not go into the house."

The Sage smiled a superior smile and promised to ride over and inspect our haven on the morrow.

"It is the very place for you," he said breathlessly, on his return. "No other corner in the world will suit you so well; the garden is absolute perfection."

"And the house?" I questioned solemnly. "Is the dwelling-place convenient?"

"Oh! as to that," he answered sheepishly, "I forgot to go into the house; it was only the garden I thought of."

So it came about that without thought of our comfort we found ourselves in possession of the Garden of Peace.

"When you settle in a home let it be near friends, and in a village," was the advice showered upon us beforehand, but we took no heed, for we fancifully thought that we knew best what we wanted, and the "fairy-story house," as it is called now, is down a bye-road, in the woods, far from kith and kin and out of reach of the sound of a busy world, only the fall of a weir in the vale breaking the intense stillness and silence.

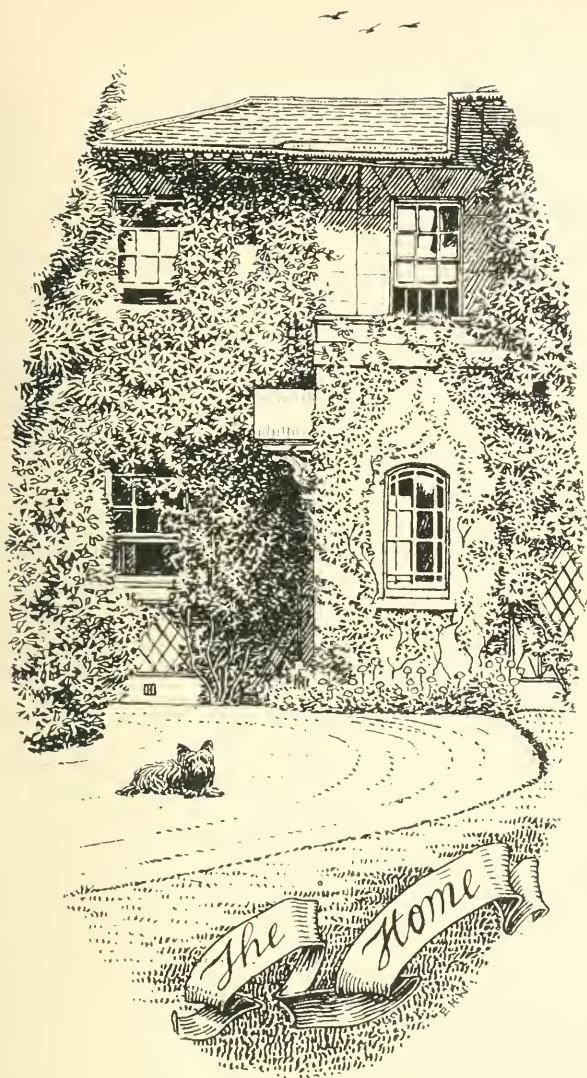
The sweet songs of birds were heard on every side, and every flower and leaf told its

A Reverie

own tale—the wonderful story of life—every nestling that broke the slender shell and every bud that burst its green prison-house being expressions of the Divine Will.

It must have been the birds who first called our garden “The Garden of Peace.” Perhaps the golden-crests christened it as they built their beautiful hanging nest in the pinsapo on the lawn, low down and in easy view, to show their trust as they flew in and out feeding their miniature young; or the bullfinches in the rhododendrons—for they showed no fear as they flew about together looking for clematis twigs; the bullies were never seen apart, and were a pattern of conjugal felicity. Or was it the black-cap, or the long-tailed tit, or willow-wren, or wag-tail who called it so? Or did the name weave itself into the great Dawn Chorus and die away at eventide as the tired throstle sang his serenade in the chestnut branches?

Whoever gave the sweet name it is verily a garden of peace for birds, for in winter time they come for food, and hurry from the trees and shrubberies in answer to a familiar whistle. In spring they build their nests close to the window and on the trellis, shaping the tiny homes even as we stand and watch them. In summer they rear their



A Reverie

young, and sing again for joy that their work of love is over; and in autumn they come and go at will, singing as birds never sing in other gardens, perching on a bough of mespilus close to the garden-seat, and telling of their joys and sorrows; for they know they can reckon on our sympathy. The flowers are their only rivals, and the Skye terrier their only enemy, and in the main Laddie but frightens them for fun and seldom turns a practical joke into serious earnest.

"Let us call the birds in these places of delight; their concerts will draw man hither, and will form a hundred times better eulogy of a taste for sentiment than marble and bronze, whose display but produces a stupid wonderment."

This from a French writer, but who can fail to write lovingly about birds? In the Garden of Peace we treat them as friends, they are not natural history specimens to us; we have learnt their ways and habits, and know what food they love and what homes they would best inhabit.

Turning the leaves of "The Compleat Angler," we recall Izaak Walton's description of birds, which must charm every lover of our feathered friends. ". . . those little nimble musicians of the air, that

A Reverie

warble forth their curious ditties, with which Nature hath furnished them to the shame of art.

“As, first, the lark, when she means to rejoice, to cheer herself and those that hear her; she then quits the earth, and sings as she ascends higher into the air, and having ended her heavenly employment grows then mute and sad, to think she must descend to the dull earth, which she would not touch but for necessity.

“How do the blackbird and thrassell, with their melodious voices, bid welcome to the cheerful spring, and in their fixed months warble forth such ditties as no art or instrument can reach to. Nay, the smaller birds also do the like in their particular seasons.

“But the nightingale (another of my airy creatures) breathes such sweet, kind music out of her instrumental throat, that it might make mankind think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and re-doubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, ‘Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven,

A Reverie

*when Thou affordest bad men such music on
earth ?' "*

*Yes ; I would fain believe it was the birds
who named our garden ; but, after all, it may
have been the lovers who found a shady shelter
on the bank, and took no note of sunset or
shadow. Some say it was the mother
wearied with overmuch love who came for
rest, and some a worker from the din of
town. After all, perhaps the name origin-
ated in our hearts, simply because no storm,
or bickering, or discontent could enter here.*



*“Hark ! how the cheerful birds do chant their lays
And carol of Love’s praise ;
The merry lark her matins sings aloft.
The thrush replies ; the mavis descant plays,
The ouzel shrills, the ruddock warbles soft,
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,
To this day’s merriment.”*

EDMUND SPENSER.

THE DAWN CHORUS

“THE birds that hop from twig to twig in our gardens, that sing in our bowers, are part of ourselves ; they speak to us from our earliest years, and we learn to understand their language.” Was it not the great thinker, Goethe, who said these words ? Oh ! yes ; and surely he has revealed to us many secrets which the birds disclosed to him in twitter and in song. And we ? Shall we not try to understand that mysterious language, too, and trace in each note and changing cadence the old, old story, which is heard in every garden, if only we rise above the work-a-day world and listen with our hearts as well as with our ears ?

It is in the spring-time that this bird-language can be most perfectly studied. The musical warblers are with us, and all birds are in full song ; and while they watch over their nests they give vent to notes of alarm and anger which are not heard at other

The Dawn Chorus

times. It is a study which naturally requires close and persistent observation and a great amount of patience, but any time expended in learning different notes, and tracing character in our feathered friends, is a thousand times repaid by the pleasure of the knowledge gained.

That birds use bad language is indisputable. If you pay a visit to jenny-wren's nest in the garden-bank, she will hop up on to the paling and expostulate with much indignation at the intrusion; she will scold and rattle and pour forth the vials of her wrath upon you in a manner quite peculiar to herself. The wren's song is very loud for so small a bird; it is quick and bustling, and the little upright tail jerks with the exertion of singing, and emphasises the high notes. Birds betray their character in their song, as human beings do in conversation; the willow-wren, for instance—the next migrant to arrive after the chiff-chaff—is a merry debonair songster, singing recklessly the whole day long, and his must be a gay, thoughtless character; while the wood-wren is a delicate, plaintive bird, tired out by his long flight hither, and showing his weariness in every sad note of his song. He is called “the shaker of the woods,” it

The Dawn Chorus

is a great effort to him to sing, and he shakes as he gives his sibilant trill. Surely the coo of the turtle-dove betokens a peaceful nature ; you never see one fussing or hurrying or quarrelling ; they sit calmly up in the fir-tree, then take a solemn little fly, and return to coo on the same spot. Up in the air the white-throat sings in a fascinating attitude, and he evidently studies appearances and likes to show off his accomplishments, for not many birds sing while flying. The tree-pipit does ; he has a pretty manner of rising up as he sings, higher and higher, until he reaches the topmost branch, then shoots up into the air, still singing as he flutters down, executing this scale of song and movement successfully over and over again. The song of the blackbird is a full, rich song, a false note can never be traced in it ; his is an honest, jovial nature, though never living on good terms with his mate. Drayton calls him the "mirthful merle," and the garden rings with his alarm-note when any enemy crosses his path or nears his nest. Many think the cuckoo has only the one familiar song, and do not realise the peculiar gurgle he has, which is much the same noise as a terrier makes when he is shaking a rat, while the female has quite

The Dawn Chorus

a different note, a sort of laughing bubble uttered very quickly, which she preludes with a low, harsh sound. Every one knows the cuckoo's bad character, and how he does not even trouble to have a nest of his own. Of course it is impossible to trace the characters of all our common birds, the primæval teachers of melody. The bird key-note is to be traced in the songs and ballads of all the poets of olden days; poets of to-day only sing about birds—you cannot trace the tone of the actual bird-song in their work as you can in the past—but no poet can give you the blackcap's deliciously liquid note, or the nightingale's trill. I have told you Izaak Walton says, "She breathes such sweet music out of her intermittant throat, that it might make mankind to think that miracles have not ceased." Of course the nightingale is the greatest musician we have, a professional amongst songsters, "most musical, most melancholy," as Milton writes. But no poet—though Tennyson reached as near perfection as possible—can convey the music of the thrush's solo in the chestnut at eventide, when other birds are asleep.

It is curious to note in birds that those who go to bed first are often the last to

The Dawn Chorus

get up; take the sparrows for instance; perhaps it is because they are such chattering, gossiping folk, and so need more rest, for they seem always to be chirping about nothing, and belong to a low caste, with a greedy character, and no discrimination as to locality or class. The sparrow has nothing to recommend him, his nest is untidy, and his knowledge of architecture is nil, only the legendary leper was grateful to him.

Those who listen to the songs of birds in the daytime and at eventide, and are content to sleep away the hours about sunrise, know little of the beauty and magnitude of the great dawn chorus—as it may be termed—from Nature's bird-opera, in which all the singers are in tune, and the harmony is complete. Early in the month of May, about three o'clock in the morning—an hour before sunrise—the wonderful strange silence and stillness of night is broken only by the rush of the river in the distance, restlessly flowing away to the sea, and even the breeze dies weary with fanning the firs. The hush is supreme, and the grass crisp and white, for Jack Frost has touched the garden with his finger-tips. Soon a moor-hen croaks his way home from the pasture, and a

The Dawn Chorus

pheasant and wild-duck are heard in the wood and by the lake ; but they only mark the silence, as do the rooks cawing sleepily in the rookery, bidding the jackdaws good morning as they mutually quarrel over their young.

A chill, grey half-hour passes ; and slowly and quietly from the corn-field, beyond the river, a skylark rises into the air with feeble and uncertain song, but as he climbs the heavens with ever-widening circles of flight, the notes become more rich and clear, and perfect in *timbre*, until at length the whole valley beneath is flooded with a strain of exquisite melody. This is the first solo, the first pouring out of praise in honour to the new-born day. Shakespeare, in one of his most beautiful sonnets, speaks of this first song as a hymn—

“ Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven’s gate.”

When the notes of the lark have reached their highest pitch of excellence, the vagabond cuckoo is heard, less melodious but perhaps more dearly loved, and the two well-known notes are followed by the gurgle as if the bird were scolding his wife for being late. Two minutes later a black-

The Dawn Chorus

bird gives the signal and begins to sing in the copse, and he is echoed in the Garden of Peace by a throstle ; then all of a sudden in a moment's space there is an awakening, a bewildering burst of song surrounds and almost deafens the listener, and fills him with amazement. A glorious chorus of blackbirds and thrushes crowds the air, a chorus unknown and undreamt of by those who only hear the day-songs. The birds vie with each other in singing their loudest and in trying who can lift the clearest voice to the dawn ; it is a great burst of thanksgiving from all the feathered host, perfect in rhythm and melody, maddening in measure. And not only the blackbirds and throstles form the chorus, but the robin next joins in, then—as they awake in order—the blue-tit and the wren, hedge-sparrows and nut-hatches, the tiny willow-wren and golden-crests, and warblers ; and after the first burst comes a duet in the pine-tree by the pigeon and turtle-dove, accompanied by the starling, who tries in his conceited way to imitate the rest. Still the chorus continues ; then, gradually, the music is hushed, and in a quarter of an hour there is again a partial silence ; the chorus is over, singers rest, the sun is rising in the east, and only solos by late

The Dawn Chorus

sleepers are heard at intervals. It is a wonderful experience, this dawn chorus, in its setting of grey, when the world slumbers, and the spring flowers, now heavily laden with dew, droop their heads as if they were saying their silent morning prayer to the rising sun. The birds seem fresher and their voices clearer at daybreak than at any other period; all their hearts are in their song, the work of feeding and building and nesting has not begun for the day, so there is nothing to call their attention away, no "trivial round" or commonplace alarm to distract them. In the chill air the chorus rises from earth to heaven in one overwhelming burst of song.

FEATHERED



ARCHITECTS

ABERTUS. "*Hast thou ever seen anything more pleasant than this garden ?*"

BARTOLIMUS. "*I scarce think there is any place more delightful in the Fortunate Islands.*"

. . . . "*Truly all things do wonderfully smile upon us.*"

ERASMUS.

FEATHERED ARCHITECTS

IN the Garden of Peace when the laburnum hangs its head, overburdened with its weight of gold, soft amethyst tresses of lilac scent the air, and spiræas, nestling in their beds of tender green, shine out white and pure. The rhododendrons burst their buds in gladness as the May sun warms them into life, and tall, purple, velvet irises lift their haughty heads in a family group. For the love that we bear them the birds have chosen our garden as a favourite nesting haunt, and though the bounds of the sloping lawn and mossy banks are limited, Nature has been lavish with her treasures, and the silence and rest and peace suit the songsters, who sing in their joy for spring; only "the winds and lights and shadows that cannot be still" and the sound of a weir in the valley below break the monotony of the woodland.

In the cedar and Austrian pine and

Feathered Architects

Spanish chestnut hang the familiar larch boxes, and a marsh-tit, a big tit, and two blue-tits have again made their homes in them. The little birds sit close, trusting to the love of their visitor not to be disturbed, only the palpitating tail indicating how the little bird-heart is throbbing in tender anxiety. Before the nestlings are hatched, while the parents go for a ramble in the copse, they cover the eggs with loose feathers to hide them from the gaze of intruders. The blue-tit is not so civil as the marsh-tit when we pay her a visit, for she sits and swears at us in the rudest manner possible, and spits again and again insultingly, and her mate dances about overhead, using such bad language that it is best to beat a retreat and peep into the other box on the chestnut tree. There the parents hop in and out every thirty seconds, and a mass of red wriggling bird-lets with big yellow mouths open in greedy watchfulness. In the erica bed, not far from "the mad little tits," and overhung by crimson heather-bells, the little willow-wren has built her domed nest—marvellously made to match the surroundings—of dried grass and heather and moss, and softly lined with down. It is close to the path, but she never moves unless we hunt

Feathered Architects

for her home too closely ; then she only flies to the bushes hard by and cowers down, spreading out her tail while her tiny white eggs spotted with red are examined. Alas ! Skye-terriers are boastful of their success as birdnesters, and little red corpses have been laid at my feet by Laddie to be bitterly mourned over. Scolding is of no avail ; his highland majesty's black nose stirs up a birdnest as if it were a hasty pudding.

Near by the willow-wren, in the rhododendron clump, the long-tailed tits dance and flutter in the air over their beautiful nest, which is like a soft moss-ball covered with a delicate tracery of lichen, lodged between two tender stems, and having a hole at the side for an entrance ; inside it is a soft feather bed, and like the other tits—before the eggs are hatched—the parents stuff up the hole with a bunch of feathers when they go out a-flying. Wonder can only fill my heart at so much beauty, so much unwearied toil and patient art, and “definite purpose of obtaining ornamental form,” as Ruskin would say ; “a bird has,” we know he says, “exactly the degree of emotion, the extent of science, and the command of art, which are necessary for its happiness”—and for the happiness of

Feathered Architects

human beings too. Across the lawn in the Douglas fir—

“Look, look, how he flits,
The fire-crowned king of the wrens from out
of the pine,”

for his nest is there, about five feet from the ground, a fairy palace of a spherical shape, hanging suspended by three delicate threads in the air, under a bough which forms a soft green canopy and curtain from the world's rude gaze. The golden-crest is the smallest English bird, and the only English bird which has a hanging nest. It is beautifully made of moss and lichens, mixed with down and wool and spiders' webs, and softly lined with feathers. So fragile are the threads that bear it, it seems as if the nest must fall when the breeze sways the branch, or the bird flutters into her home. She will let us visit her nest a dozen times a day, and will perch on a bough while we look first at the eggs and then at the nestlings, scolding her little heart out in polite remonstrance, but not rudely, like Mrs. Blue-cap. Sometimes she will sit still looking reproachfully at you with her black beads of eyes, refusing to move, emboldened by the encouraging song of her mate as he bids her be brave and stick to her post in that funny

Feathered Architects

little song of his, with which he relieves her weary hours and reminds her of the days when he wooed her. How the little wrens pack into the tiny hanging nest is a mystery. One day, after a short absence, when we suddenly visited the nest it was startling to be greeted by a firework of golden-crested babies, which went off with a whizz, and the air rained fluffy feather-balls on the grass. It was an anxious moment, but watchful parents soon gathered their offspring under the pine, and we will hope under their wing, as "a light wind blew from the gates of the sun" and the turtle-doves wooed and cooed overhead in the pine-tops. Two sweet turtle-doves come over the sea year by year to this garden, their soft cooing adding to the peace and rest :

"Cuck-oo ! Cuck-oo ! was ever a May so fair ?"

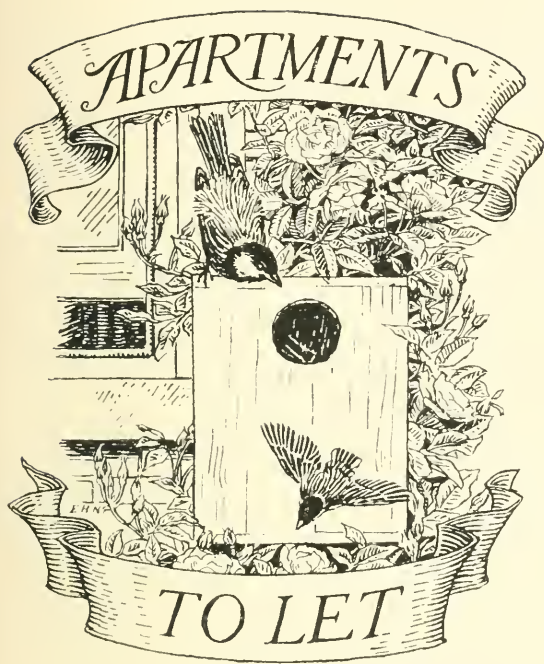
And the birds echo the sentiment, the starling up in the acacia imitating all the others, not content with his own harsh note, which he tries, with endless bowings and bluster, to make you call a song. Of all the common nests in this Garden of Peace, the chaffinch will take the prize for order and trimness ; it is very small for the size of the bird, and is built neatly of moss

Feathered Architects

(which somehow is always green), and interwoven with hair and grass, not built with sticks and twigs like other nests. This interweaving of course keeps it compact and tidy, and makes this tiny home a great contrast to the bullfinch's nest, which is built low down at the edge of the rhododendrons, an untidy little construction of loose twigs apparently built up criss-cross like spilikins, yet firm enough for parent marauders to rear a family of young garden marauders to worry our hearts next spring when the buds are covering the trees. The fly-catchers are lazy, and build in last year's nest on a ledge in the trellis ; and black-birds, throstles, and sparrows, greenfinches and black-caps, with robins galore, have their homes all over the garden. It is as good as a visit to the Natural History Museum, with this glorious advantage, that the hearts of the birds in this garden are beating, and they can wander at will wherever their fancy leads them. Each nest is a work of art, all of infinite variety, and all of infinite interest ; each feathered architect has done his best ; and, as the spring sun shines against the blue distant firs, the young greens of the trees vie with each other in variety of tint, and the "charm of birds" encircles us, again Ruskin's words

Feathered Architects

echo in my heart, "Why should not our nests be as interesting things to the angels as birdnests are to us?" for "we ought to all be doing human work which would appear better done to creatures above us, than it does to ourselves," a supposition which in its simplicity, with birds for teachers, surely cannot be an insolent one.



*“ You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the weird clapping of the woodpecker
Rang loneliness and sharp. The sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of Spring stirr’d everywhere.”*

APARTMENTS TO LET

“APARTMENTS TO LET.” This notice is all over the Garden of Peace in the very early Spring ; in fact, as early as March, and the landlord visits the tiny tenements at intervals to see if any have been taken. Our bird boxes will be described in another page ; the hollowed larch logs with moveable tops, and these make cosy homes for the different tit-mice and starlings. Luckily sparrows have not found out these apartments, which is fortunate, for a sparrow is a presuming, vulgar bird, and quite devoid of conscience.

A fly-catcher had a beautiful nest on a ledge of the trellis, half hidden by starry clematis and glorious Gloire de Dijon ; it appeared a dangerous place for a home to the uninitiated, but the fly-catcher sat happily peeping over a rose at the passer-by. But a day dawned when she went for a ramble with her mate, leaving another egg beside the two already laid. An ugly

Apartments to Let

sparrow and his wife took it into their heads to oust the fly-catchers, and adding a little untidy straw and streamers of bass matting, turned out the eggs, and laid their own instead. The fly-catchers were aggravated naturally, but they have no pluck, and lost heart at once, and after a faint remonstrance, left the sparrows masters of their nest.

The landlord, however, was displeased, and after the sparrows' eggs were laid a long ladder was placed against the house, and the whole nest destroyed. "Now you see what comes of taking our home," clicked the fly-catchers, and the sparrows flew off to chatter angrily in the laurels.

The sweetest home in the garden is hardly in the garden at all, for it is on the window-sill of the room where the mistress dwells. It is a little green square box, with a lid which lifts up and down on hinges, and a hole in the side facing south, so that the sun may shine in at the window at will, and bring living, health-giving rays to the inhabitants.

On April 7th, a pair of big tits, hearing tell of these apartments, came to prospect. The hen bird flew inside, and searched the corners well, while her mate clung to the edge of the hole, and chattered all sorts of

Apartments to Let

good advice, and wearied her with suggestions. Then they flew away, and were not seen again, and the landlord thought the box would be tenantless, for no other birds called to view it. Of course they did not, for the news spread abroad that the big tits had really taken it; and on May 5th they came early in the morning, and put a little moss loosely in the four corners—just a little pinch of moss, and no more—and flew away again for two whole days to talk over their labours quietly, and to make up their minds what to do next. Even on the third day they did not trouble to do much, and only the four corners were lightly covered as before; but that evening Mother Big Tit took up her abode there, and said to her mate that the following morning he must really get to work at a proper nest, and stop fooling about, for she meant business, and was going to lay an egg. This thoroughly frightened him, and early next morning, when he found she really had fulfilled her threat, he fetched a lot of rough tufts of hair and scraps of moss and fur to cover up the precious egg. They neither of them had time to put the little home really into proper order till the 10th, for as she was busy laying her eggs, he had most of the fetching and carrying to do by him-

Apartments to Let

self. But by the 10th all four corners were well and firmly filled up with moss, and the round centre lined with hair and fur and a few little feathers. All the tufts had been disengaged, and some of the coarsest taken away, and the rest neatly laid, so that it might be pulled over the eggs when He and She flew abroad.

As far as the landlord could gather, Mrs. Big Tit, when once she had laid her eleven little white-speckled-with-red eggs, and had made up her mind to sit, never left the nest again till her young were hatched. How her little bones must have ached, and how cramped she must have got, but a mother heart, even in a bird, is possessed with a marvellous patience, to which there is no beginning and no end, and no question of "how" or "when." Hour after hour her faithful mate fed her. When he flew on to the mountain ash on one side of the window, and uttered his little call, she would half rise, and peep out to see whether the coast was clear, and no stranger at the big window (of course she did not mind her mistress), and when she had ascertained all was well she would give contented little chuckles and twitters in her throat, and he would fly down, and, clinging to the opening,



Apartments to Let

would drop the dainty morsel into his wife's mouth. Often during the day the lid would be lifted and loving eyes would peep in to see how things were progressing, only to be greeted by a great stretching out of wings and an angry hiss, as much as to say, "I know you don't mean any harm, but for goodness' sake do leave me alone."

On May 28th the first little egg was cracked, and a tiny orange-red lump, with a square head and great obtruding blind eyes, wriggled into existence, and called itself a bird. Not till the 30th was the last little life launched into the world in the window-sill box, and then the serious part of the entertainment began for the father and mother. Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, from early morn to eventide, they journeyed with tempting green caterpillars, sometimes varied by a fly or two. The coming of either parent on to a bar which supported the eaves was always the signal for a great commotion in the little home; such whisperings and twitterings and struggles to get to the top of the bunch, for it was a trial of patience for the tiny birds to wait while their father and mother looked round and about to see that all was safe. Then

Apartments to Let

was the amusing time to take a peep and to be greeted by the baby chorus, and to see down eleven little yellow throats while the long necks were outstretched and little bare wings flapped. Soon the feathers began to creep down the quills, and by the 10th the eyes were open, and it became a matter of certainty to a visitor that they were really young big tits. Louder and louder twittering, and the parents began to look tired and worn, for appetites never flagged, and every day more food was required.

"We'll never have a large family again, my dear," said the father, as he dropped a big green caterpillar into the gutter by mistake. "I can't think why you lay so many eggs."

"Because I like to be a credit to my race," answered the mother, as bravely as she could. "A Big Tit would think it *infra dig.* to be black-capish, and only lay four eggs."

"I daresay you are right, my dear," answered the husband, as he listened in despair to the cries for more from the box, "but I think myself that Mrs. Black-cap is wise in her generation."

The mother sighed; she did not care to agree, but she was a little tired out, and

Apartments to Let

felt glad the next spring was a long way off.

But the work was nearly over, for by the 16th all the young ones had flown, except three backward, timid ones, and they followed on the morrow, and silence reigned on that window-sill.

Of the other apartments to let the old walnut-tree stumps were the prettiest. A giant walnut had been felled down by the ruined abbey, and was forthwith sawn up. Seeing some splendid limbs with knots and holes, the landlord begged he might have some for his lodgings in the Garden of Peace. One was planted on the lawn, and made into a two-storied mansion, and covered with everlasting white sweet peas, where tender green tendrils clung to it in loving sympathy for its fall. Another was on the bank enveloped in the entrance of a Virginia creeper, and a third placed in the shadow of the Douglas fir, but too much in the shade, for no tenant has been found as yet. All the boxes in the trees were full in the spring, and could be visited at will. Families of big tits, blue caps, marsh tits, and starlings; but of all the homes the window-sill box was the landlord's favourite.



“Flowers are the beautiful hieroglyphics of Nature, with which she indicates how much she loves us.”

GOETHE.

UNDER THE SPANISH CHESTNUT

"You may place a hundred handfuls of fragrant herbs and flowers before the nightingale, yet he wishes not, in his constant heart, for more than the sweet breath of his beloved rose," writes Jami; and again, "The nightingales warbled their everlasting notes, and rent the thin veils of the rosebud and the rose."

Reading these lines under the shade of the Spanish chestnut in the rosary it came to me, if not "with the splendour of a sudden thought" at least perfectly, what beautiful ideas, like rays from heaven, form a halo round flowers and birds. It seems so easy to trace a touch of the finger-tips of God in the sweet blossoms, and legends of the garden are welcomed rapturously by those who have a soul for flowers. The very first idea of the flower's birth is beautiful. It is said that in the garden of Eden they bloomed as flowers

Under the Spanish Chestnut

have never bloomed again, but outside, amidst the bareness and barrenness, our first parents as they toiled from morn to night mourned their loss. At last the angel of love took pity on the toilers, and as their tears fell on the thorns and thistles, tangled briar and brambles, the gracious sun shone through their tears and the prismatic colours turned to flowers.

Every flower and bird has a story of its own in the Garden of Peace, only it varies with the mood of the owners. Some are old, some are new, but I will tell them as they come to mind.

The story of the passion flower-which clings to the trellis is known to all, representing as it does the Passion of our Lord. "The leaves resemble the spear that pierced our Saviour's side, the tendrils the cords that bound His hands, or the whips that scourged Him; the ten petals the apostles, Judas having betrayed and Peter deserted; the pillar in the centre is the cross or tree, the stamina the hammers, the styles the nails; the inner circle about the central pillar the crown of thorns, the radiance the glory, the white of the flower the emblem of purity, and the blue the type of Heaven. The flower keeps open three days and then disappears, denoting the

Under the Spanish Chestnut

resurrection." Thinking of the passion-flower brings the beautiful cross-bill to me with his crossed bill, which was bent as he tried in the pity of his bird-heart to pull the cruel nails out of our Saviour's hands and feet, and makes a bond, closer than kinship, with the robin, whose red breast was given him in memory of a drop of our Master's blood which soiled the little brave bird's breast when pecking at the thorns in the cruel black-thorn crown round the sacred Head.

Robert Herrick, who evidently was envious of the babes in the wood, wrote an ode to him :

" Let thy last kindnesse be
With leaves and mosse work for to cover me ;
And while the wood nymphs my cold corpse inter,
Sing then my dirge, sweet warbling chorister.

Perhaps the nymphs he alludes to are violets, for the violet was once a nymph called Tanthys, whom Apollo courted ; but she loved him not and fled from him and hid in the woods and was turned into the little modest flower which every one loves for its sweetness. Viols on which the fairies play.

Old world names of flowers fill the borders with thoughts and memories, and the pen would weary in the telling before

Under the Spanish Chestnut

we could pass halfway round the garden, for in the different seasons there is hardly a plant which will not furnish a poem. Rapin speaks of the Mary-gold (the gold of the halo round Mary's head) :

“She Phœbus loves and draws her golden hue
From him, whose sparkling beams she keeps
in view.”

The French call it “souci du jardin,” which is a pretty name enough and the old poets “flower golde and mary-budde.” Rosemary, too, with its healing powers and old-world fancies, is one of Mary's flowers ; it is regarded as an emblem of constancy, and it is grown in Germany in large pots in winter and sprays are sold for religious ceremonies. In the springtime the snow-bell of the Italians rings a tiny peal in answer to the throb of the heart of Spring, and drops its head to earth to hide its heart from the cold blast, whilst it bids us know that it was St. Agnes' flower. After the snowdrop, the crocus in its bright raiment of “cloth of gold” pierces the brown earth and points a finger to the sky, and calls to the crown imperial to tell its story. Some say she was a Queen who was driven from Court, and, spent with grief, was turned into a blossom, keeping

Under the Spanish Chestnut

the imperial beauty and the name ; but there is a far more beautiful story which links it with the passion-flower and birds. In the garden of Gethsemane, where our Saviour in sorrow and agony suffered for the sin of the whole world as He never suffered on the Cross, the flowers drooped their heads as He passed, only the crown imperial holding her head aloof. Our Master looked at the flower and sighed ; the flower heard the sigh and its blossoms hung repentant at once, great tears gathering in the petals ; and the crystal tears are there now if you lift the golden blossom and peep within. Its sweet honey is supposed to be poisonous to bees, but this I will never believe. Old writers call the daffodil Lent lily, or chalice flower, and after blooming to cheer the fast they add to the glory of Easter. Amidst the April showers, irises creep up their stalks and through their gossamer mantles.

“ Fair Iris now an endless pomp supplies,
Which from the radiant bow that paint the skies,
Draws her proud name, and boasts as many dyes,
For she her colour varies and her kind,
As ev'ry season to her growth's inclined.”

So there is small wonder that the iris is with us nearly the whole year round, and

Under the Spanish Chestnut

that she has colours in her paint-box to suit all tastes.

“ . . . Who can paint
Like Nature? Can imagination boast
Amid his gay creation, hues like these?
And can he mix them with that matchless skill,
And lay them in so delicately fine,
And make these varied marks so just and true,
That each shall tell the name denoting
Its peculiar birth?”

But as I muse on sweet stories of flowers the birds are jealous, and a cuckoo in the wood bids me tell how the village girl kisses her hand when she hears him for the first time in the spring and asks the question, “Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be married?” and the old folks borne down with age inquire, “Cuckoo, when shall I be released from this world’s care?” But the cuckoo is such a scamp I will not choose to honour him by telling all the stories that I know about him, and I would rather dream of the roses with their endless legends, and listen to the nightingale who drew my attention to his song as I was absorbed in Jami’s story of his love for the rose. It is good to know a bird is constant to a flower, and that you cannot tempt him to worship at another shrine. I will never believe that a nightingale has a sad heart or that he sings with his breast

Under the Spanish Chestnut

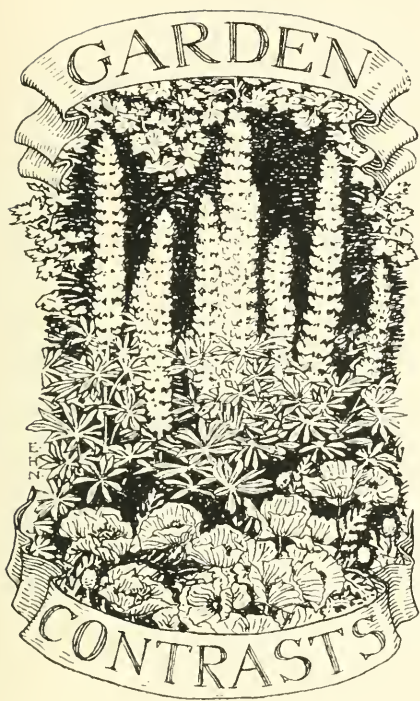
against a thorn; if the mythological history of the nightingale is a sad one, and we all know of Philomela, grief has been softened by time and the beautiful song is joyous at last.

“I heard the raptured nightingale
Tell from yon elmy grove his tale
Of jealousy and love
In thronging notes, that seemed to fall
As faultless and as musical
As angels’ strains above ;
So sweet, they cast all things around
A spell of melody profound ;
They charmed the river in its flowing,
They stayed the night-wind in his blowing,
They lulled the lily to her rest.”

It was the rose which inspired his song, and a rose it must have been growing in the Garden of Peace. Would you know whence the rose got her sweet scent ? “Love, in a feast of Olympus, in the midst of the gaiety of a light and lively dance, overthrew, with a stroke of his wing, a cup of nectar, which precious liquor falling on the rose, embalmed it with that heavenly fragrance which it still retains.” “ Objets des baisers du Zephir ” are the roses, and every bud which opens is a fresh joy. I can pick a little handful of buds and a spray of brown leaves and spend happy moments gazing on them and thinking of

Under the Spanish Chestnut

the Infinite Love which has called them into bloom. If we uncurl a leaf, no human power with art, and science, and knowledge at command could replace it. We may unfurl a frond of fern but the deftest fingers cannot refurl it. As day by day passes and the garden and flowers endear themselves more and more to the heart, I bid you come with me and I will read new stories to you and find fresh beauties.



“ Contrast is a good thing, but we should first get a good sense of the thing to be contrasted, and we shall find this preferable to the contrast if we are not rich enough to have both in due measure. We do not in general love and honour any one single colour enough, and we are instinctively struck with a conviction to this effect when we see it abundantly set forth. The other day we saw a little garden wall completely covered with nasturtiums, and felt how much more beautiful it was than if anything had been mixed with it. For the leaves, and the light and shade, offer variety enough.”

LEIGH HUNT.

GARDEN CONTRASTS

To one who has a garden soul, the grouping of flowers in a garden becomes not only a labour of intense love but a distinct art. And I would have you cast as much thought on the arrangement of colour as an artist would on his model's drapery. Sweet confusion doubtless there must be to gain artistic effect, but let there be a method in your madness, and Nature will blend together what is crude and hard. Above all things, bear in mind that colour is what a garden stands in need of most ; and the colour must be in masses, in different shades if you like, but in sufficient quantity to attract the eye at once. White blossoms are beautiful indoors, in the orchard, or hanging against a blue sky, but they are of no avail in beds or tubs, though I would allow white everlasting sweet peas to ramble in a tendrilling way over an old stump, or clamber up a green hedge, for there is nothing like this flower, I know.

Garden Contrasts

Speaking of green hedges, see that you have a whole army of the *Tropæolum speciosum* clinging to them all along the way. Perhaps it will be hard to grow at first, but plant it in the shade, very deep beneath the soil, and water well, and then hope for the best ; it will repay any trouble, though it be watered over and over again with tears of disappointment. On a bank, in the Garden of Peace, there is a picture of a bed against a dark background. It is lavender, sweet lavender, and amidst the soft, silvery leaves and gentle mauve spikes, tall orange lilies tower in the sun, and shine like copper and gold in their glory.

Another contrast I would have you paint with gentle, loving touch, is a group of tall white lupins, straight and upright, in consciousness of absolute purity, and at their feet a tangle of scarlet Eastern poppies, glaring in colour, bending their stalks this way and that way, but with faces to the sun ; their great loose petals quivering with love as the warm rays reach their hearts.

Round an old Elizabethan house you would plant a border of eucalyptus and nicotina, rosemary and China roses, so that leaning out of your window at night to

Garden Contrasts

hold communion with the stars that sprinkle the blue, a sweet scent would be wafted to you, to tempt you to dream of the flowers. There is a walk that I know of with a trellis along the side, over which jackmani of every shade is trained, and between the soft hued clematis roses are planted, all Richardsons, and different yellow shades, harmonies in amber ; then a little further on grows a hedge of tropæolums, from the darkest maroon to scarlet and palest buff, all in the wildest confusion, running rampant across each other in a mad dance of growth, clinging to one another with their leaves and tendrils in their endeavour to reach the highest point first. Another harmony for a bed is in a mixture of heliotrope and ageratum, the mauve of the one shading off the purple of sweet cherry-pie, and filling in the gaps between the dark leaves. Sometimes it happens that colouring comes by accident, and then it is more beautiful, and appeals to the heart more than a settled plan, because it is unexpected. I remember an instance of clumps of rose campion, statice and gypsophila, a veritable poem in colour ; but perhaps the prettiest group in the sunshine by the rockery is composed of white soft irises and red-orange and yellow

Garden Contrasts

Iceland poppies. They look like jewels together, for they glisten and gleam as sunbeams play among the flowers, and a peacock butterfly poises on a pearl petal to add fresh hues for the light to catch. There must always be butterflies to play on the borders, as there must always be birds to sing, and nest, and feed.

To plant a long border against a shrubbery I would give the following recipe : In the background sweet peas of every shade and colour, the more the merrier. Then miniature dark-centred sunflowers, and in front of them white single dahlias. One step nearer and a band of old-world blue salvia patens, with its complimentary colour in Jacoby geraniums, and down again to a band of lobelia to intensify the red. Perhaps some would call it, in their ignorance, a vulgar mixture, but Nature cannot be vulgar. Ah ! yes it can. But that was the gardener's fault, for he planted tagetes and purple petunias in a bed and they flowered madly and hurt the eye. Another long border you must back with hollyhocks, scarlet and crimson cactus dahlias in front, all-coloured zinnias (but let no white one fall by accident amongst them), and purple verbena for edging. Of course in the rosary you will always be

Garden Contrasts

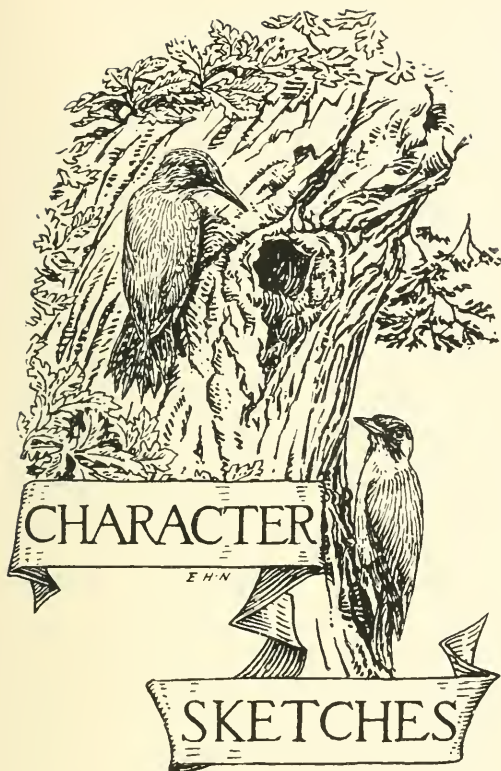
careful to group sweet roses of one kind together. A bed of a sort is best, or at any rate at least six side by side ; but this chapter cannot treat of roses, they want a book to themselves, and then another book to prove the first wrong ! In every garden, at some point, you should come across a patch of red and yellow and blue, and learn to mass if you would garden well and wish to gain a reputation for effect. Let everything be planted with a meaning. I stand white Madonna lilies as sentinels at the entrance of my rosary, and in a gap in the shrubbery, across the heath bed I plant another possey of them to carry the eye across the lawn to the woods beyond. More can be done with white lilies than the heart dreams of ; there is a majesty about them, and a calmness which gives rest and purity to a garden ; and they group themselves so perfectly in dazzling, spotless garments. Of course every one agrees with the poet that in the spring-time forget-me-nots must grow in every bed, with red tulips between, but spring-time is so beautiful in itself that you need not trouble so much about it ; it is when the green is heavy and the flowering shrubs are over that you must be ready with your contrasts and your colouring.

Garden Contrasts

In every garden, large or small, old-fashioned, or of modern make, there must in all certainty be a "sweet border." "My lady's border," let it be called. Not a single sprig must grow on it which cannot boast of its scent, or a flower bloom which has only its beauty to gladden the eye. Rosemary, lavender, and thyme will be found there, and dear old crimson clove carnations, side by side with sweet bergamot. On the wall at the back, myrtle and honeysuckle and lemon-scented verbenas, with star-flowered jasamine and magnolias. Mignonette will fill all the gaps, and cherry pie, with here and there a sweetbriar and a bush of "old man." Scented geraniums of course, large-leaved and small, and nicotinia for the eventide. Aromatic, fragrant, and ambrosial odours must all be represented, some with more aroma, some with less, but all sweet; and some breathe forth their sweetness at dawn and some at even. Violets will hide their heads under the wall, and musk will trespass on the edge, while early in the year lilies of the valley, wall-flowers, and narcissus, jonquils, and sweet-scented irises and peonies will find a corner, whilst "the lavish stock that scents the garden round," will blossom profusely. Some

Garden Contrasts

lilies are sweet and may peer up between the other plants, but where would the list end? The sweet border is an endless story, the first page of which is in every heart, and the last is yet unturned, and carries one into another world.



“What can we call the principle which directs every different kind of bird to observe a particular plan in the structure of its nest, and direct all the same species to work after the same model? . . . To me it seems the immediate direction of Providence, and such an operation of the Supreme Being as that which determines all the portions of matter to their proper centres.”

ADDISON.

CHARACTER SKETCHES

“ IF you will encourage the birds so much, you must not grumble when your fruit buds are eaten, your seeds do not come up, and green peas fail to appear at your bidding. It is the tom-tits do all the damage.”

I could only laugh scornfully at such doleful warnings, and pity one who can really believe that birds do more harm than good ; besides, peas may be a delicious dainty, but what are peas to the song of a blackbird, or the glint of green in the sunlight as a greenfinch flits across the garden ? And as for the titmice, they are part of our stock-in-trade ; we could not do without them, for they give us endless and unceasing amusement through the cold of winter as they feast on pounds of hemp-seed ; and do they not fill our nest-boxes for us in the glad springtide when all the world is young ? Green peas can be purchased for a paltry sum, but untold

Character Sketches

gold will not bring the birds as they come to us.

One little blue-tit in the garden evidently thought he would show more originality than his fellow-tits, and scorned the ready-made homes in bird-boxes and stumps, so went off with his wife on a voyage of discovery, determined in his curious little bird heart to choose a spot which would be absolutely safe and free from intrusion. At last after diligent search he fixed on his home. On the house, between the uprights of green trellis to which the *Rêve d'Or* roses clung, there were two water-pipes, one being shorter than the other, and, squeezing himself between the lower one and the trellis he discovered a quiet little recess at the back, "far from the madding crowd," where he could rear up his family in safety. It was a delightful discovery and the nest was built forthwith. Whether insects had become more plentiful and Papa Tom-tit ate more, or whether he grew fat and lazy while his wife laid her eggs and sat upon them, I know not, but by the time the little birdies were hatched and the real work of life begun he could hardly get in between the pipes at all. I have stood for ages watching his heroic little efforts to squeeze himself flat, holding on bravely to a green

Character Sketches

caterpillar, and not daring to open his bill and groan, while all the time the twittering inside grew louder and louder, and the tired mother would arrive with more food and watch her mate's efforts with an impatient want of feeling. "Do hurry up, my dear," she chirped, "the children are dreadfully hungry and I want to fetch more."

"It's all very well for you to say 'hurry up,'" he sighed, "but I can't get in."

"Open out your wings and wriggle in sideways, that's how I manage it," she said, and following his wife's advice, he spread out his wings, one in front and one behind, and triumphantly entered.

"You are a wonderful bird," said the tom-tit, as his wife quickly followed with her morsel for the children, "A wonderful bird."

"Necessity is the mother of invention," she answered, in a tone which rather aggravated her husband as casting an aspersion on his reasoning powers, "if you will take a house just for the sake of the situation and view, without giving a thought to comfort, you must put up with the unpleasant consequences."

If there was one thing more than another this tom-tit hated it was moralising, so he flew off in a rage and left her to do all the

Character Sketches

work for an hour, which soon made her sorry for what she had said.

After hearing this conversation my heart was touched, and I called for a ladder; and when both parents were absent we cut the trellis away, heedless of the bad language of the pair, who returned and watched us from the rose garden, and regardless of the hungry cries of the nestlings; but we were forgiven when, having watched us off their premises, they flew up with a cry of joy and entered without bruising their poor little bodies in the attempt.

"Dear, dear, what a surprise," said the father, who thinking force was required, fell headlong into the top of the nest.

"Rather a heavy surprise for the children," grumbled the anxious mother, "you should learn to be more careful, my dear."

"Yes, yes, I daresay, but what has happened to the door?"

"The caretakers have been at work, of course, bless them."

The caretakers of the garden. That is what the birds call us; placed here by their Master who numbers their very feathers.

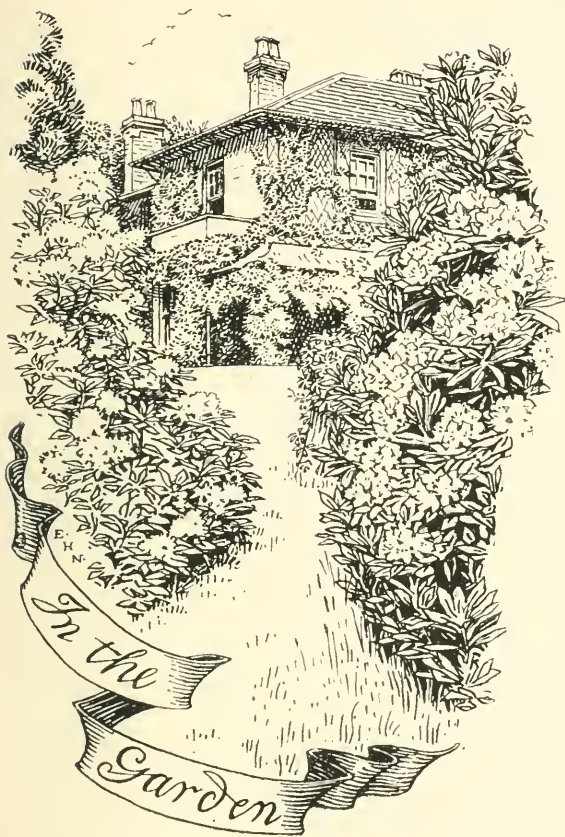
Titmice have to take what homes they can find ready-made, and do not, like the woodpeckers, make holes for themselves

Character Sketches

wherever they wish. Woodpeckers have only to choose their tree and then set to work and bore with their strong bills till they have made a hole large enough. The entrance is always quite circular, as if drawn by a pair of compasses, and they often try experiments, and begin several holes before they are satisfied that all is well. One green woodpecker's nest just outside the garden in the wood is always a joy to us. It is in an old gnarled oak, twisted and knotted by time, which looks down with disdain on precocious saplings rising from the undergrowth. Laddie found the nest for us. He heard a mysterious hissing coming from a hole half-way up the trunk, and whined to us to investigate the matter for him, as it was out of his reach. Laddie never loses a chance of gathering knowledge. His master says it is interest ; I am apt to think he has the bump of curiosity strangely and wonderfully developed. When other little dogs lie quietly at their mistress's feet Laddie will wander about, poking his little black nose here, there, and everywhere, in search of a new sensation. Looking up the trunk at the foot of which the dog was standing on his hind legs quivering with acute excitement, we, too, heard the hissing and knew that he had

Character Sketches

found a woodpecker's nest for us, and that the young were crying for food, as all young things do. Calling Laddie away, we took refuge in the bracken at a little distance under shelter of a holly tree. I wanted to watch the beautiful laughing yaffle in his domestic circle, and I held a bough of fern before my face and peered through the tender green curtain. Very soon a cry was heard and the father bird flew down and clung to the bark at the entrance of the hole, but just before going in he twisted his crimson head and espied an enemy in ambush. Hastily he ran round the trunk and peered at us cautiously. Evidently woodpeckers are of a doubting and suspicious nature, for in spite of cries from the nest he continued to watch us from his coign of vantage. He thought our presence more dangerous than hunger, and wanted to see us safely off before he fed his little ones. Soon another laugh was heard, and we saw the mother bird approaching, but a warning cry from her mate made her fly away in the opposite direction. "She will soon come back," we said to one another, "if only we wait a minute or two." So she did; she came back over and over again, but she was never allowed to come near her home. Each time a warning,



Character Sketches

more and more angry and dictatorial in tone, sent her off again ; and woodpecker wives are good, obedient birds and are, as wives should be, in complete subjection to their husbands, for the famished cries of a whole family and great agony of mind combined, did not tempt her to disobey her mate. For a whole hour we waited, and the yaffle stood on guard, now peeping round one side of the trunk, now on the other, sometimes running up higher to get a better view, then again getting as near the hole as possible to whisper words of comfort to the nestlings, who were beginning to think life was hardly worth living if this state of things continued much longer. At last we took pity on them and on their anxious, timid mother and we left them, slightly aggravated at the manner in which we had been kept waiting. As we wended our way through the high bracken, out of sight of the old oak, we heard a joyous, gladsome laugh and knew that once more peace was reigning in that nest, and a mother was allowed to return to her little ones. Woodpeckers should be taught to trust. . . . Ah ! but then they built outside the Garden of Peace, and keepers do not make such safe custodians as the caretakers of the titmice.



*“ These birds have joyful thoughts.
Think you they sing
Like poets from the vanity of song ?
Or have they sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for
what they have ? ”*

TENNYSON.

THE CHARM OF BIRDS

To those who love birds, a record by the owner of the Garden of Peace may prove of some interest—a record of the songs of birds kept day by day assiduously for a year. Some may know our sweet songsters by sight, but to identify each individual bird by sound is a gift not bestowed on many. The first fact to be gathered from these copious notes is that each month in the year has its particular bird—one bird which monopolises attention, and is heard more frequently than the rest. Of course, in different parts of the country different birds will reign supreme. This record was kept in our own particular corner of Surrey, in the midst of the woods.

To *January* is dedicated the mistletoe-thrush, whose nick-name of storm-cock indicates that he sings as a warning that tempestuous weather is pending; all birds seek shelter from the blast, but he sings

The Charm of Birds

from the top of the tallest tree, and "braves the tempest out." Other birds in this month are only heard at rare intervals—the pigeon, yaffle, and robin, now and again the three bell-like notes of the big tit and a nut-hatch breaking the monotony; others are there for the eye to rest on, but not for the ear to note. The thrush is *February's* bird, singing lustily early in the morning and well up to dark, more in the woods than in the garden at first, the certainty that spring is coming bubbling up in each triple cadence of his song. He sings on rainy days more than other birds do, and prefers them to bright sunshine; perhaps he realises how loving songs can recall sunshine in dark times. Pigeons are noisy too in February, and the chaffinch tries to tune up, but fails miserably; while the nut-hatches and jays call to each other in the woods. *March* may be claimed by the robin, for practice has brought him some good notes by then, and though he does not sing all the year round, as some imagine, he makes up for it in March. Bright sun in the morning, after a night's frost, warms the hearts of the tiny choristers, and the edges of the woods are ringing with outbursts of their melodies. About five o'clock in the morning

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the blackbird begins ; and the "mad little poet" now waits till evening, for his nest is completed and his mate is laying her eggs—perhaps he is anxious about the future—paternal cares weigh heavy on his spirits. The yellow-hammer was in full song in the middle of the month, and on the 27th two little notes in the Spanish chestnut certified that spring was surely come, for the chiff-chaff had arrived, with tired little notes at first, but soon to get stronger. *April* is a great bird's month, belonging by right to the blackbird, for he sings lustily all day long. The mistletoe-thrush ceases for the year ; and by the end of the first week most of the warblers arrive, and after a rest become very noisy. All day long the chiff-chaff repeats his tiny song, and thrushes again sing more and more. Smaller birds, such as the hedge-sparrow and wren, do not sing much at the close of April ; in fact the hedge-sparrow is almost dumb. Through the woods occasionally the long whistle of the nut-hatch is heard ; robins and thrushes are the last to go to bed, and the chaffinch is almost annoying with his persistent, short song. On the 9th, two swallows arrived, and in the last week the nightingale was first heard in the garden—that

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professional amongst songsters who is unrivalled and supreme. He is so well taught; the strength of his vocal organ is wonderful. Bechstein tells us that his larynx is much more powerful than that of any other bird. The compass, flexibility, and harmony of his voice is beautiful; however rich the blackcap's note may sound, it is quite thin if you happen to hear a nightingale at the same time. Nightingales vary very much—some sing infinitely better than others, especially the older birds. They have a tantalising habit of beginning a song over and over again, then breaking off suddenly in a provoking manner, just to make the listener wish for more. Gay Philomel! I find it difficult to trace traditional sadness in your tone. Perchance, since the Wild Birds Act, you have become more joyous. King Cuckoo's reign in *May* is indisputable; he is noisy and somewhat disreputable in his habits, yet he is loved by all, and there is an echo in almost every heart when he is heard for the first time each year. Most birds sing very little when rearing their young, consequently some are partially silent this month. The chiff-chaff, however, never leaves off singing his monotonous little see-saw song, and all the

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warblers are heard warbling love-lyrics to one another. We note that thrushes sing more at the close of May, and blackbirds less. Many birds compete for precedence in the record for *June*. In the garden, golden-crested wrens are heard more often than the rest; in hedges, the yellow-hammer; and the white-throats sing unceasingly, and put the robin to silence; while chiff-chaffs and chaffinches are noisy everywhere. On the third of the month, the dear cuckoo was out of tune for the first time, and as the long days of this beautiful fresh month drag slowly out, he is heard persistently round the garden and woods till towards the fourth week, when gradually he sings less and less as the willow-wren begins to call more and more. Perhaps birds are wrapped in admiration of the glory of roses, and forget to sing; perhaps their voices are tired out, for at the end of June all the feathered songsters sing very little. There is no doubt that the turtle-doves belong exclusively to *July*; their soft purring in the pine-trees marks the rest and peace of a hot afternoon in the cool shade of the mespilus on the lawn, with a book lying idly on the grass, and the hum of Nature blending with the fall of the weir in the blue dis-

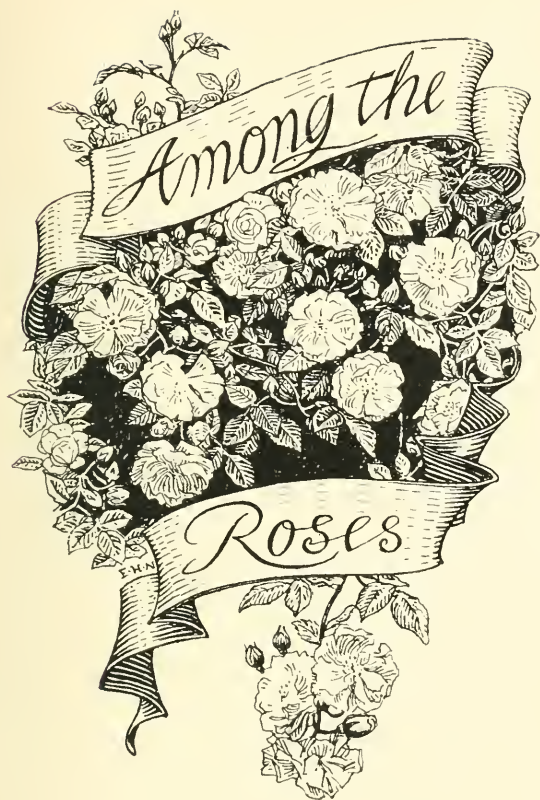
The Charm of Birds

tance. Nearly all warblers stop singing ; only an occasional blackcap, white-throat, and chiff-chaff are heard ; they are saving their breath for the flight across the ocean. "Johnny Squealers" chase each other round and round the house, and the fly-catchers are noisy, they always fuss so over their young, who seem to need no end of attention. In the rhododendrons, greenfinches scream, and the nut-hatches' winter note is heard in the wood, but is drowned by the cooing of doves, and passes unheeded. Winter seems a long way off in summer-time—old age is out of sight in the July of life—who would not rather listen to the cooing than trouble about winter notes? *August* may belong to the woodpecker, for he is heard here, there, and everywhere—a flash of green between the tree-trunks, then an echo in the oak copse over the field. In the woods all the young jays are chattering in company ; while at eventide the "burring" in the beech tells us the fern-owl, or night-jar, is close at hand. Now and then the chiff-chaff is heard—mostly his call-note—and then September comes, and it is only in the sunny corners sheltered from the breeze that you hear him ; on the 20th he was heard for the last time. *September*

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belongs to the jays. In this month their cry is paramount ; not a song, but the best they can give us. Towards the end of the month only the robin, nut-hatch, and tits are heard daily. *October* recalls the owl every evening at dusk, when the leaves fall and the wind whines weirdly in the chimney. Even the robin is almost silent, and the hedge-sparrow again comes to the fore. Suddenly the nut-hatches—after being silent many days—are heard, and a lark soars singing into the sky in search of sunshine. When “the days are cold and dark and dreary” in *November* and *December* (for these months must be bracketed together), you hear the hedge-sparrow piping a sad little note, only heard at this time of the year ; and the wren rattles as a few stray leaves run races over the gravel. Drip, drip, drip, falls the rain on to the verandah. Sometimes the robin ticks just to show he is alive ; and one misty morning a pigeon and blackbird relieved the monotony. The year is tired out and old, and the birds are silent. Tits come searching for seed, and now and then nut-hatches chatter, but the “charm of birds” is heard no more, and hope for a coming spring—which seems a long way off—is all that comforts the heart.





“ You have heard it said—and I believe there is more than fancy even in that saying, but let it pass for a fanciful one—that flowers only flourish rightly in the garden of some one who loves them. I know you would like that to be true ; you would think it a pleasant magic if you could flush your flowers into brighter bloom by a kind look upon them ; nay, more, if your look had the power, not only to cheer, but to guard ; if you could bid the black blight turn away, and the knotted caterpillar spare ; if you could bid the dew fall upon them in the drought, and say to the south wind in the frost ‘ Come, thou south wind, and breathe upon my garden.’ ”

JOHN RUSKIN

AMONG THE ROSES

IN our Garden of Peace which the birds haunt there is a verandah from which the "Maids of the Village" hang in great white clusters, and a "Crimson Rambler" sends up vigorous shoots to meet the snowy fringe, and a loose "Rêve d'Or," in golden splendour, climbs another pillar, trying to outshine its neighbours, while between them a soft blush rose blooms in gentle competition, but, failing in the attempt, hides humbled behind its leaves, little dreaming that all the while it is sweeter than the rest. This verandah leads to the rose-garden circling our old sun-dial, sheltered by a belt of shrubs, and partly shadowed by Spanish chestnuts. Tall white Madonna lilies in stately grandeur stand sentinel at each entrance, and near by a jewelled bed of white irises and orange Iceland poppies shines and glitters in the sun ; mauve and white campanulas ring their bells for joy, sweet-bergamot

-Among the Roses

raises a red tassel of a head, and pale larkspurs borrow a little blue from the sky to help to bring it nearer the earth. On the sun-dial a fly-catcher sits unmindful of the quick flight of Time, while "everywhere are roses, roses;" and it is difficult to choose at which shrine to worship first. Wordsworth's "budding rose above the rose full blown," is exemplified among the hybrids, as, for instance, sturdy "Captain Christie," or by virtue of merit, "Margaret Dickson," a giant white rose with a faint blush centre, resting in its framework of green. As each glory unfolds itself, Edmund Waller's advice to the maiden in his poem comes to mind, and wonder ceases that he chose such an 'object-lesson as the rose. The old reign of cabbage-roses and China roses is over now, and the beautiful, soft, delicate, loose tea-roses carry off the palm, with their additional charm of red-brown foliage and crimson stems. It is no longer a case of "gather ye rose-buds while ye may, Young June is still a-flying," for they bloom generously from May to October. Tawny-yellow buds of "Madame Charles," and the soft flesh-colour or copery-rose of the sweet "Comtesse Nadailac," vie with "Jean Ducher" and "Francisca Kruger" in tint and absolute perfec-

Among the Roses

tion, while a blushing bunch of "Madame Lambard" makes the pure whiteness of the "Hon. Edith Gifford" more pearly-white than ever. It is when standing in the rose-garden by the sun-dial, with an armful of precious blooms, that the old legend of the rose can best be appreciated ; "The Rose came of nectar spilled from heaven ; Love, who bore the celestial vintage, tripped a wing and upset the vase ; and the nectar, spilling on the valleys of the earth, bubbled up in roses." This is easily understood by those who love their gardens, and each rose-tree typifies intense sacrifice by blooming its heart away, giving out the fullness of its being at the sun's behest. The poet's love of the tea-rose is easily traced in his fascinating book, "The Garden that I Love." "Faultlessness in flowers," he says, "is almost as rare as in human beings ; but tea-roses are absolutely faultless. Their stems and their leaves are as graceful as their buds ; not one of them is of a bad, vulgar, or tawdry colour," and they are found in our garden that we love, though the poet can sing their praises with a truer ring. "Poetry is a luminous halo which makes thought clearer as well as larger," and can paint the flower with a

Among the Roses

truer touch than an artist's brush. On the window-sill, near the rose-garden, was a forgotten heap of rose-leaves, and when the human world was still, a blackbird came and laid a mottled green-grey egg among the leaves, thinking perhaps the world was a hard world even in a moss-lined nest, and that at all hazards one nestling should be reared on a bed of roses. A nature lesson for Ruskin to ponder over and turn into the language beautiful, for parent birds had best be content with what the Creator provides, and a bed of roses is not always a criterion of peace. Addison, in the *Spectator*, written in 1711, tells us that "a cloudy day, or a little sunshine, has as great an influence on many constitutions, as the most real blessing or misfortunes;" so with the roses, a shower or a day's sunshine influences the life of a rose. After a shower, soft buds droop their heads and rose-leaves cover the brown earth, hurt by the lightest touch of wind or rain. "Listen to the garden talking while it rains," writes Phil Robinson. "The roses are weeping their pretty flowers away, drop, drop, drop, one petal at a time, and then, on a sudden, a whole sob-full." Golden "Etoile de Lyon" petals, "Anna Olivier's" flesh-tinted fallen

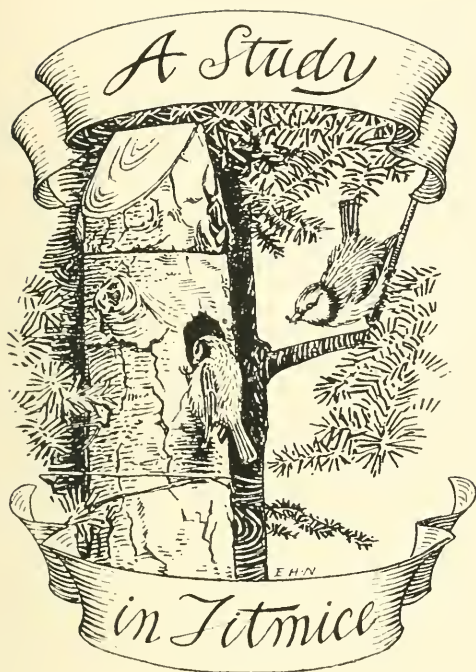
Among the Roses

leaves, and an orange litter from the over-blown blooms of "William Alan Richardson" carpet the beds. After the rain, thrushes come listening over the grass as worms are tempted to the surface, and family conclaves of red-starts and robins are held under the bushes. "I imagine it would be delightful to study roses for a decade, and then write a book," says an American author; but a study of decade upon decade would never reveal half the varying beauties centered in all tea-roses. There was a time when it was said they were too delicate to grow in the open border, but that time has passed, and a scatter of withered bracken proves sufficient shelter for the tenderest plant. Of course amateur rose-growers possess Dean Hole's excellent book on roses, full of good advice, pithy sayings, and quaint humour; but rose-culture has advanced, and his knowledge is hardly up to date; besides, experience is the best teacher, and success must be won through failure. For exhibition, roses should be plucked with the dew on them, for "the rose is sweetest washed with morning dew," as it lies like the faint blue bloom of a peach on the dark crimson satin leaves of "Prince Arthur" and "Fisher Holmes;" at three o'clock in the

Among the Roses

morning, when the lark is singing its sweet welcome to the dawn—before the sparrows begin to chirp or the first thrush awakes—the anxious rosarian must be busy in his rosary. But what true lover of the queen of flowers can have the heart to disbud and prune and “prink” unmercifully for the empty glory of having, perchance for one day in the year, a finer rose than a neighbour’s?

After the rose is dead the fragrance lives, for the leaves, gathered and blended with sweet spices, make again the pot-pourri which our great-grandmothers made in the olden time, and which haunts by its sweetness old blue jars in the oaken chests. And roses—whether monthly roses or yellow and white Banksia clusters, or the old-fashioned rose of Provence—make a pot-pourri of sweet memories in hearts, and conjure up shadows on the grass long vanished away. By the old moss-covered grey sun-dial, as the sun marks time, and thoughts of wild roses climbing the hedges outside, or a waft of sweetbriar on the air, bring other dreams, every bloom in the rosary “by human love made doubly sweet,” begs for love in return, “eternal vigilance,” and gentle worship.



*“The merry titmouse is a comical fellow ;
He weareth a plumage of purple and yellow,
Barred over with black, and with white interlaced,
Depend on’t, the titmouse has excellent taste.”*

MARY HOWITT.

A STUDY IN TITMICE

SANTA KLAUS has vanished, and the children have almost forgotten the glory of Yuletide; but outside our window in the Garden of Peace a Christmas-tree still stands erect, because no one has the heart to take it away, and disappoint the feathered tribe who come in ceaseless flow from the trees and shrubs to enjoy the long-continued feast. A leg-of-mutton bone hangs in gaunt nakedness from one bough, dainty bits of suet take the place of gaudy-coloured balls, little tins of seed and nuts serve for sweetmeats, while pieces of meat or slices of plum-pudding form a variety for those who do not care for toys. From the top of the verandah on each side of the tree, a miniature Venetian bronze water-carrier hangs—suspended by a single string—full of hemp-seed, and on these the titmice perform startling acrobatic feats a thousand times a day. The water-carriers sway to and fro as the breeze catches

A Study in Titmice

them, and the whole forms a study in titmice, illustrated from Nature's wonder-book, which would satisfy the most ardent Selbornian and fill pages in "Nature's Notes." All the surrounding shrubs seem alive with tits, for the news of the feast has spread to the neighbouring woods ; and though at first the birds had to learn how to crack the seed, the lesson was an easy one, and hunger a quick teacher. The ox-eye, or great-titmouse—called also the saw-sharpener—by virtue of its size—like John, Duke of Burgoyne—rules the roast. Sometimes three of the same species land on the edge of the bucket at once, and cling with outstretched wings and open beaks, hissing at one another as it spins round and round, all three wanting to make a dive for seed at the same time ; then two turn giddy and fly away, and while number three is trying to steady himself, a little blue-cap pops down and carries off a prize. There is no need of the poet's question :

"Where is he, that giddy sprite,
Blue cap with his colours light ?"

For he is here, there, and everywhere,
little pugnacious bird, in and out between

A Study in Titmice

the big tits, and if kept waiting for a moment, he performs an acrobatic feat, and climbs head downwards on to the string, then lets himself fall with a run (as the naughty boys do on the banisters) when his turn comes. Well does Wordsworth call him :

“Lithest, gaudiest harlequin,
Prettiest tumbler ever seen,”

with his crown of bright cobalt blue and dress of green, and grey, and white. Gilbert White calls him the blue titmouse or nun, and says he is a greedy bird, and can easily be caught in a snap mouse-trap baited with suet, but it is better he should be entertained on hemp-seed in winter and sunflower-seed in autumn, or allowed to pick holes in apples in the ground. Poor little blue-tit, why (as Mr. Knapp says) should he have incurred the anathema of a parish for an item to be passed in a churchwarden's accounts “for seventeen dozen of tom-tit's heads?” At first the tits could hardly balance themselves on the spinning bronze ; but soon they became adepts at the feat, and have already learnt that if they want to stay the wild career of the bucket, they must lodge on the edge with

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their heads in the opposite direction to which it is turning, and the check given by a sudden dive stills the bucket for an instant ; then the big tit flies down, and, finding a coal-tit ensconced within, flies off in a rage, giving a parting kick to the whole concern, and frightens the tiny bird into beating a hasty retreat, leaving the treasure free for the bigger birds. Hewitson is right, the titmice are perfect mountebanks ; it makes no difference to them in their gambols and antics whether their heads or their heels are uppermost. The marsh-tit, which after a time is easily distinguished from the coal-tit by the absence of the white patch on the nape of the neck, may doubtless be very fond of hopping about osiers and willows, and searching for food in swampy ground ; but Seeborn seems to think he has hardly a right to his name, for he is so often found in a garden ; and, at any rate, one thing is certain, he loves hemp-seed, and is the sweetest, prettiest little bird ever seen, not much larger than the golden-crested wren. He has to watch his chance, and sometimes rests on a rose bush, giving a plaintive “chip-chip,” as if hurt in his feelings at having to wait so long, full of wonder at the blue-tit’s boldness, and awe at the ox-





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eye's size. It is very pretty to see the tits on a branch hard by, with the seed between their feet, tapping and breaking the hard shell ; and when they are all at work, the shrubbery sounds like a fairy forge, with fairy hammers beating on the anvils. Strange to say, the coal-tit can break three seeds while the big-tit breaks but one, and the marsh-tit carries off three at a time in his tiny bill to have a private feast on his own behalf, perhaps shares it with a prospective mate.

In a lily-bed in our garden, the mice were busy feasting on the bulbs, so we improvised a trap of an earthenware jar sunk in the ground half-full of water, and just below the rim a piece of butter was placed. There was joy the first morning when the corpse of a mouse was discovered, a little brown burglar of bulbs, and the success of the trap was extolled. With the second day the voice of mourning was heard in the land, for a greedy blue-tit, preferring butter to hemp-seed, had ventured in too far, and a beautiful nut-hatch shared the same fate. After these two verdicts of "Found drowned," even the lilies were sacrificed ; and if beyond the Austrian pine and heath-bed one lily is missed from its place and fails to raise a

A Study in Titmice

white pure head to the blue sky, it is better so than that we should have to ask with Wordsworth,

“ Light of heart and light of limb,
What is now become of him ? ”

or miss the rapping in the wood and cry of the nut-hatch in the garden. Now that the bullfinches are busy at work despoiling the snowy mespilus of buds is our time for fixing up our bird-boxes ; these have been made of logs of larch hollowed out about fourteen inches long, with all the bark left on them, and a hole cut in the side, for the birds to enter at. The top is made to take off and on, so that the landlord may pay a visit at will to see how his tenants are progressing. These boxes are nailed to trees in warm cosy corners, where they may look as much like the trunk as possible, little ready-made homes for tits and nut-hatches ; and underneath the verandah is fastened one of the old-fashioned terracotta nests, shaped like a bottle, which in olden times were fixed under the eaves of houses to tempt “ good-luck ” birds to come and breed, and so bring happiness to the homestead. Round the Christmas-tree the ouzel, with tawny bill,

A Study in Titmice

chases its mate ; timid starlings come hobbling up to feed ; sparrows, of course, with the hedge accentor ; chaffinches, green linnets, thrushes, and robins join the merry throng ; but only the tits are acrobats, and—but for an occasional nut-hatch—enjoy the venetian-bronze buckets to themselves.



*" I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet birds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder."*

SHELLEY.

BIRDS IN A GARDEN

FLOWERS blossomed in the Garden of Peace in gay profusion, but the forest trees and conifers made the shelter, and with belts of shrubs, formed cosy corners everywhere. It was to the trees that we owed the presence of so many feathered friends, and these were loved as dearly and watched over as carefully as the flowers. As the shadow moved round and round the sun-dial in the rosary when the sun shone, marking the passage of days and months, birds in the garden supplied us with bird studies gratis; and, watching from the window, or from some nook outside, family histories were illustrated by living pictures, in which characteristics could be noticed at leisure. Beautiful lessons, too, might often be learnt from the birds, and many a thought and idea carried to the heart in a song.

It was early one morning in the merry month of May, that a thunderstorm broke

Birds in a Garden

over the Garden of Peace. Peal followed peal, and lightning came in sudden flashes like golden darts; the air was heavy, and clouds rolled up from the moorland. The great dawn chorus was silenced, and trembling birds hopped into the shrubberies to listen. Drops of rain fell like tears, and each clap seemed louder than the last, as if some awful battle was waging in the sky, and unseen spirits were at war. We could only stand in awe of the power of the storm, realising how the majesty of sound triumphed, and for the moment the invisible held undisputed sway. Birds were silent—all except one beautiful thristle, who sang on in the mountain-ash by the window. As peal followed peal, the song only became louder and more musical. Lightning and thunder never daunted him; raindrops could not still that voice. It was as if trust vanquished fear. Over and over again the triple melody was repeated, and for nearly an hour the bird sang with scarce a moment's interval. The storm was long, but the song was longer, and the trustfulness of that little bird-heart carried its lesson abroad. He never paused, as some might pause, to wonder when the storm would cease, or whether his loved ones were safe, but he

Birds in a Garden

patiently waited, and so had strength to sing through weal and woe.

There was another thunderstorm in the garden late in the summer, at even-tide, when clouds hung heavy overhead, and hearts ached with sorrow and sadness. Birds were silent, for the work of nesting was over, and they needed rest; and no throstle sang to bring trustfulness. As we listened at the open window, longing for the air to cool, the bells in the church tower some distance away suddenly broke into a peal, and the sound came wafted on the breeze between the thunder and lightning. It brought the same story as was heard in the song of the thrush, echoes from an unknown world, where all is love and rest—but it is of the birds we are writing.

May and June are the months when fascinating nestlings sport upon the lawn, accompanied by anxious fathers and mothers, who generally take one little birdie at a time for an exploration across the grass, to see what hidden dainties can be found under the turf. Blackbirds and thrushes cause us most amusement, for they are over-bold in their greediness for their offspring. Outside the bay-window, in the sunshine, when the white acacia shines in

Birds in a Garden

pearl drops against the blue, and Iceland poppies glow, and sweet syringa and white scented peonies are in bloom, a father blackbird was seen promenading with his son. The parent bird very soon pounced on a buried grub in the grass, and triumphantly brought it to the surface; this he presented to his voracious offspring, who took it rudely, and without as much as a word of thanks to his father, who went off chuckling to himself. Presently the old bird, missing the continuous chirp at his elbow, looked round, and in a moment grasped the situation. His son in his greediness had taken the grub sideways, and was striving with infant herculean gulps to swallow the dainty morsel. Flying quickly to the spot, the blackbird took the grub in his beak, and holding it tight by one end, encouraged his son to try again! It soon became a case of "pull devil, pull baker," and the process lengthened out the grub, which gradually—but this time, surely—disappeared down the baby throat, after which satisfactory conclusion the two hopped off together, the old bird puffed up with pride at his own cleverness, and the young one puffed out by the hugeness of the grub.

Another favourite feeding spot, gener-

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ally occupied by a parent thrush, was Laddie's bowl under the Spanish chestnut, which was often left standing full of meat and bread, for Laddie was a fastidious dog, and would only eat when his loved master stood watching by his side. On the edge of the bowl the old thristle would take up a position, while the baby thrush stood below with his great mouth wide open, showing a big yellow cavern of a throat; and into this mouth his father would drop scrap after scrap, till the poor little greedy bird gasped for mercy, and could only hop away in painful jerks, too full to chirp, and too overcome to long for more.

But feeding on the lawn was not always an unmixed pleasure. Feelings we had none for grubs or caterpillars, but when a beautiful sparrow-hawk came darting down, and catching a fledgling in his claws, proceeded to pluck it and eat it in full view of the same window, sympathy was divided, though one's heart was naturally with the victim. Still, hawks must live, and they are good friends to us after all. Keepers may blame them, but keepers are not infallible, for their horizon is so limited and their judgment warped.

Other parent birds are not so devoted to

Birds in a Garden

their young after they have left their nest as blackbirds and thrushes are. A poor little greenfinch will often be left alone crying for hours in the mespilus tree after its first flight, no fond father or mother coming in answer to the plaintive lament; and it is difficult to conceive of the loneliness in that little heart, unprotected in a pitiless world. Now fly-catchers are different; they will fuss and fuss over their young, sitting till late in the evening on the old stump, and uttering their monotonous "click click," with a big caterpillar in their beak times without number, and when at last they have shoved their children off the trellised ledge, they will fly about in family parties, like the titmice do.

In the trellis over the drawing-room window the chaffinches built a nest, building even as we watched them, turning round and round, and flapping their wings to make it a perfect round, then flying off to the wood for another bit of lichen from the oaks.

The different titmice lived in every corner of the garden. A pair of cole-tits took up their abode in a hole at the foot of a gnarled old apple-tree, twisted by age, and lichened by time. They were very

Birds in a Garden

pleased with themselves for having discovered such a desirable abode ; but, alas ! they were not left in undisputed possession for long. A toad took it into his ugly square head to inhabit the hole, and tried to oust the pair. He had as much right there as they had, he croaked crossly, and in spite of pecks, he sat and sulked in a corner. But the tits also refused to move, so after a long consultation and concessions on the side of both parties, they mutually agreed to live together harmoniously ; and when the young birds were hatched, old Mr. Toad would often watch over them whilst the parents went off together in search of caterpillars off the rose trees. When watching the tits one day we saw three young water-wagtails fly down upon the lawn, and stand in an exact line at regular intervals, waiting for a minute or two, absolutely still, so that we might admire their drill ; they were evidently three recruits from the bird army, and very proud of themselves they looked at their achievement.

Endless amusement can be gained from our feathered friends if only you watch them carefully. The greatest fuss ever experienced in the Garden of Peace was when a lazy untypical mother cuckoo laid

Birds in a Garden

an egg in that same wagtail's nest in the ivy on the house. Every one was told of the fact by the noise Mr. and Mrs. Wagtail made when their own second brood were turned out, but they unnaturally fostered the intruder, and reared him successfully. Long after he flew into the fir-tree they continued feeding him, but his presence so annoyed all the other birds in the garden, that they united in a body, and drove him into the wood, whither the foster parents followed and fed him. But he was an ungrateful child, and soon deserted them, and they returned to sulk on the roof, and mourn over the ingratitude of the cuckoo babe.

"Swish, swish, swish," is heard in the air, and a party of swans pass overhead with their long necks outstretched. They have been drilled like the wagtails; the great white wings all beat in unison, producing the sound as of one mighty bird, if we only close our eyes and listen. Wild duck are often seen in their triangular flight; and at eventide, when the day's work is over, and the rays of the setting sun shine behind the blue firs, casting a glow over the world, the croak of the heron is heard, as he slowly flaps his way to some distant pond to fish. A hen harrier, too, passed

Birds in a Garden

by the field, and hawks without number
haunt the air. It is a garden of birds,
without doubt, but the birds bring love and
happiness, and add by their presence to
the joy of the peaceful spot.



“ Behold ! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her æthereal wings,
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music in the waves and woods she flings,
And love in all that lives, and calm on lifeless
things.”

SHELLEY.

BIRD-LIFE IN SPRING

Now that spring is gently creeping over the land the time has come to note what visible effect the long, tireless frost of 1895 has had on the feathered host haunting garden, copse, and hedgerow. News comes to us from many parts of the country that songsters are scarce, and the lovers of birds mourn as they think of the blackbirds and throstles who crept into the rabbit-burrows to die of cold and starvation, and whose bodies are now being found daily by ferreters in many districts in Surrey. If this mortality has extended over other parts of the country in the same proportion, there is little room for wonder at the unusual silence of the season—the absence of “the charm of birds.” Luckily, it is only the first stage of being frozen to death which is painful, the end is only insensibility and an endless sleep. When the rime was on the trees, and the thermometer below zero, nothing was more pathetic than to mark

Bird-life in Spring

the tameness of wild birds, denoting as it did that starvation-point was reached, and that little bird hearts were beating feebly in painful want.

Feeding birds (to those who love them) became a science as the frost continued, and well has the labour been repaid—for, taking as a single instance this garden we are writing of—where the birds have been well cared for, blackbirds and throstles abound in plenty (they begin singing their love songs at five o'clock in the morning) and the titmice don their best plumage, their splendid condition attracting the attention of all visitors. Outside the windows on the lawn the top of the village Christmas-tree was planted this year in the snow and the boughs hung as usual with suet and bones and walnut-shells, while a space in the snow was cleared, and this was strewn half a dozen times a day with bread crumbs and hemp-seed, wheat, chopped-up meat, and suchlike delicacies. On a little table close to the window were nuts for the nut-hatches, pretty blue-backed birds with soft chestnut breasts, who became quite tame, flying off with their treasure to their “câche” in the old wall under the beech-tree; and on the swept path rape-seed was scattered for the linnets and goldfinches.

Bird-life in Spring

In fact, all the birds became so tame that when their host went outside to replenish the supplies and whistled a well-known call, they flew across the lawn towards him, and the shrubs close by instantly became alive with guests. Now and then a squirrel came and made sad havoc in the tree and demolished the nuts on the table ; but he had notice to quit, and hurried off in a passion, making up his mind to revenge himself on a feast of lily-bulbs and daffodils ; and his place was at once filled by the nut-hatches again, a one-legged chaffinch who hopped gaily about apparently not at all inconvenienced by the loss of a limb, hedge-sparrows, blackbirds, robins, and thrushes, with all the different titmice, who spent most of their time balancing upside-down on the walnut-shells, which were filled with tempting lard, and suspended by threads to the tree and verandah. In the woods the bodies of defunct rooks were found hanging to boughs and lying on the ground, having been starved to death ; for the only food within miles was frozen turnip-tops, which had to be burrowed for under the snow—and indigestible food enough it was, hardly keeping body and (may we say?) soul together. Coming home to roost over the woods, they had to stop and

Bird-life in Spring

rest from sheer weakness—a thing they would never think of doing in an ordinary way.

Now the scene is changed, and the rookery is the centre of noisy family life, a great deal of chattering and fussing is going on among the nests high up in the fir-trees, and the jackdaws seem to be quarrelling over their domestic arrangements, and are disturbed and upset in their minds by a hawk who insists on crying in the air overhead, and, just to annoy his neighbours, has chosen to build this year in the rookery. A yaffle laughs the hawk to scorn, and flies off to find a convenient tree where he can bore a hole and make his nest while he recalls the first day of the thaw, when he spent hours on the edge of the lawn boring into an ants' nest, revelling in a feast he had not enjoyed for weeks, and caring little in his greediness whether his crimson head was covered with dirt or not.

“Of all seasons there is none that can vie with the spring for beauty and delightfulness,” writes Addison in May 1712. “It bears the same figure among the seasons of the year that the morning does among the divisions of the day, or youth among the stages of life;” and the chiff-chaff echoes

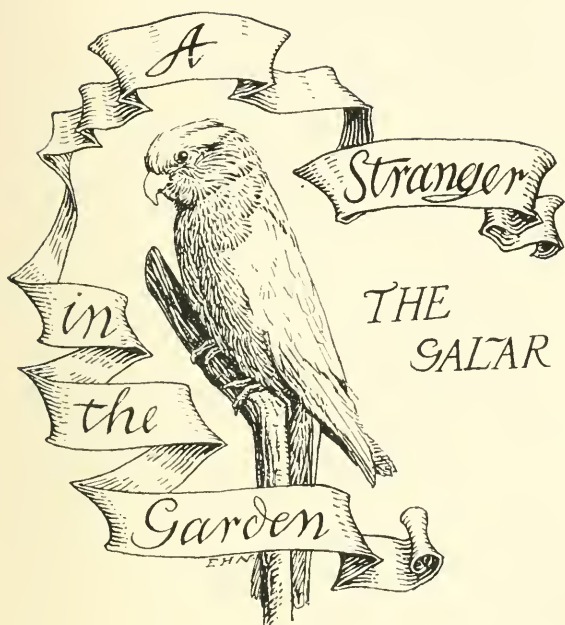
Bird-life in Spring

the sentiment overhead. This little warbler is the first of the migrants to arrive ; the first to tell us on his arrival from Algeria, in that monotonous little song of his, that spring is here. "Chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff ;" yet no song is more welcome ; and as we listen to him—glad to hear his greeting—a flock of fieldfares fly overhead, uttering a clatter of good-bye on their way to Norway ; whither Wolf, the great animal painter, and Gould followed them to study their ways and habits. So the ways of the migrants cross, and set one thinking of ships that pass in the night, of the order that daily changeth, and the study of bird-life becomes more and more absorbing. In the same letter of Addison's quoted above from the *Spectator*, he writes : "The cheerfulness of heart that springs up in us from the survey of Nature's works, is an admirable preparation for gratitude. A grateful reflection on the Supreme Cause produces it, sanctifies it in the soul, and gives it its proper value. Such an habitual disposition of mind consecrates every field and wood, turns an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice, and will improve those transient gleams of joy which naturally brighten up and refresh the soul on such occasions, with an inviol-

Bird-life in Spring

able and perpetual state of bliss and happiness." A study of Nature's works must bring us into touch with the Creator, and the "struggle for the life of others" cannot be more perfectly illustrated, even to Drummond's satisfaction, than in the bird-life of spring-time.

The birds are courting in pairs over the garden ; now the catkins cover the hazel, and the palm is in bloom, and they are ready to give their lives for their nestlings, the beautiful nests being tangible proofs of untiring love. Over the woods a soft green is creeping, and a blush of purple buds is visible at last. The heart of spring is throbbing with life, everywhere the brown earth is pierced by green shoots, and the bare boughs are bursting into life. The heart of spring is throbbing, it is heard in the garden, in the woodland, on the moor ; and though the dead gorse and heather and burnt shrubs remind us that the deadly frost laid his hand upon the earth, the cold is forgotten in the glorious awakening of Nature.



*“ My heart, inflam’d by jealous heats,
With numberless resentments beats ;
By turns my hidden grief appears
In rising sighs and falling tears
That show too well the warm desires,
The silent, slow, consuming fires,
Which on my inmost vitals prey,
And melt my very soul away.”*

Spectator, Sept. 15, 1711.

A STRANGER IN THE GARDEN

IT was on a very hot day in June that the stranger arrived ; a soft yellow haze simmered against the blue distant woods, and the bees hummed gently as they dipped into the flower bells, and butterflies flitted about in a careless, merry way, having made up their minds, as life was so short, not to worry about anything, but to get all the fun they possibly could. A beautiful peacock butterfly exchanged "the time of day" with a red admiral, and wondered how he could be so content with his black coat turned up with red ; a sulphur yellow bowed to a painted lady and flew off to the blue lobelia, for he knew the contrast of colour would attract. But, in spite of the heat, the stranger shivered and ground his beak, then bowed his head repeatedly, and looked round to see what sort of a place he had got to. He could afford to be supercilious, for had he not travelled hundreds

A Stranger in the Garden

of miles, even at his early age, and crossed the ocean which divides the new world from the old? We looked at him admiringly, and we offered him food, which he stirred up angrily and scattered across the verandah. "A most unmannerly bird," grumbled the Skye terrier, as he walked off in a fit of the sulks, wondering at our folly in paying so much attention to a stranger. We thought Laddie would admire our visitor, and give him a welcome as he had come so far and wanted our care and love, but we were sadly mistaken. From the moment that the beautiful grey and pink galar entered the house, the little dog heart was eaten up by a profound and increasing jealousy. For three whole days he lay under the stairs, too cross to eat, too angry to bark, too sorry to come near his master and mistress. The bird took up his abode in the dining-room, so Laddie remained outside for a while, and if coaxed to enter would come in very slowly, carrying his tail with a hurt, injured air, and being greeted by a piercing scream from the cage, refused even to turn his head, and pretended not to take the slightest notice of the intruder. Then a fresh cause of annoyance arose, for Cocky was allowed out of his cage, and ran about the floor in

A Stranger in the Garden

a provoking quite-at-home manner, just as if the house belonged to him, instead of considering himself a general nuisance, as any right-minded bird would do. To hear the grey and pink stranger admired, and to see him caressed by his mistress, made Laddie miserable, and his heart was sore, and refused to be comforted, for even his beloved master fed and fondled that odious bird. One morning suddenly a brilliant idea struck him. If Cocky was allowed on the floor, he would watch his opportunity, and even if he had to wait for years, he fully made up his mind to catch that galar, and twist that lissom neck and chew those grey and pink feathers, till nought remained to be admired. This thought cheered him, and he lay quietly nursing his hate as the bird sidled up to him and began bowing and scraping. "Can't we be friends?" said Cocky; but the Skye terrier shut his eyes, and the bird scuttled off in a huff. "Dogs are beasts," said the stranger, and began to scream piercingly to be lifted up on to the table, and seizing the pepper-pot by one of its feet, he ran round and shook it violently over the spot where his enemy lay. "This is beyond a joke," said Laddie, as he left the room in high dudgeon, his heart bursting with pain, for he heard his

A Stranger in the Garden

loved ones laugh at his discomfiture. "We were all so happy, and life was like one continual bone till that brute of a bird came," he cried to himself under the stairs. "What shall I do? Oh! what shall I do?" It seemed as if fate verily heard that cry, for the cage was carried out on to the lawn, and in a moment of forgetfulness the door was left open, and the stranger thought he would sally forth and see what the Garden of Peace was like. It was an odd sensation at first to feel his wings again, and he flew up on to the rhododendrons and frightened a young thrush out of his wits, who was making his first voyage of discovery unaccompanied by his parents. "What the dickens is that?" cried an old blackbird, as he flew low across the lawn to warn his mate, who was looking after the children. "Birds are not at all neighbourly here," said the stranger, with a sigh, as vague memories of his home came to mind. "I shall have a fly and stretch my wings a bit, I'm dreadfully cramped," and up he went, in a heavy, clumsy manner, across to the woods, and was lost to sight. Laddie knew of that flight from the garden and gave a light-hearted bark. "A good riddance of bad rubbish," and round and round he raced, chasing imaginary rabbits,

A Stranger in the Garden

and flying in and out of the shrubs till all the birds thought he had gone mad, and were filled with pity. Then the empty cage was discovered, and a cry of mourning filled the land. Round and round the garden we searched, flattering ourselves that a cut wing would prevent the galar flying far. Round and round the woods, in an ever-widening circle, with the same result, no bird could be found ; and at last we sat down in despair, thinking we should never see the stranger again. Laddie thought it best to keep out of sight, but his heart was beating with a great, grand hope.

Then news of the fugitive came. A lad had seen a strange bird, and had rushed to the farm for a gun ; but a kindly cottage woman, knowing of our loss, warned us, and we hastened down into the valley to save our pet. There we saw him, high up in a walnut-tree overshadowing the river, dancing and bowing on a branch, half in gladness, half in fright, wondering what all the commotion was about. Over and over again the trees were climbed by enterprising villagers, but with the same provoking result—whenever the bird was just within reach of an arm, he would give a fearful scream and fly off

A Stranger in the Garden

to another tree. Then he took up his abode at the top of a high elm by the roadside, and the little crowd of watchers sat down on the bank in despair. "Come along, come along!" called Cocky, as he bowed to his audience. "Pray have another climb, I think it's rather fun." But we took no notice, and he bit the bark in a passion. After a council of war, we decided to leave him there till it grew dusk and he became quieter. As the hours passed, more watchers were added to the group, and the offer of reward for the truant grew larger, much to Laddie's annoyance. "I've a great mind to bite any one who catches that horrid bird and doesn't wring his neck," he muttered to himself; and, his temper getting the better of him, he slowly went up the hill and into the garden.

Silently the sun sank behind the firs. The song of birds gradually died away, and a soft white mist rose over the river like a veil. The last kiss of the afterglow faded, and presently a timid little star twinkled in and out of the blue, uncertain whether or no it was time to shine. Then the moment so long waited for arrived, for Cocky was standing quite still, dozing gently while he dreamt of a happy, undis-

A Stranger in the Garden

turbed home beyond the sea, far away from Skye terriers and human giants. Stealthily a man climbed up from bough to bough with a big canvas bag under his arm, and every one in the crowd held his breath as higher and higher he went and his way became more and more perilous. Words of advice and warning were wafted in hushed tones to the adventurer, and Cocky dozed on in blissful unconsciousness that his hour of freedom was at an end. It was a moment of intense excitement; nearer and nearer and more cautiously the enemy crept, for the task was becoming hazardous, and the bird awoke. Nearer and nearer, clinging on for dear life, while every neck was stretched upwards and every eye fixed on the truant. One more step, one sudden uplifting of the arm, and the bird was deposited in the sack, his beak fastened firmly into the hand of his captor. A mighty shout arose, which echoed across the vale and was heard in the Garden of Peace bringing the glad news. The prodigal returned accompanied by nearly the whole village, and his master and mistress rejoiced in a manner which reduced Laddie to a jealousy bordering on murder. The stranger had seen the world and felt very proud at having

A Stranger in the Garden

created so much excitement, and an extra fastening was bought for his door to ensure his future safety.

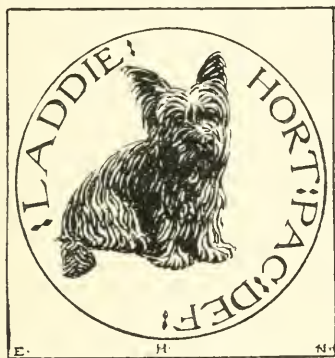
Then we tried to teach him to talk, and I still maintain that after endless lessons and continued teaching, he did say "Halloa Cocky." But I have heard folks tell that they never heard him say it, in spite of the fact that he continued repeating it over and over again as we sat at breakfast, or when he ran round and round the table, making a steeple-chase of plates and dishes. Poor Cocky, he loved so to have his feathers ruffled, and would stand for ages in a silly, idiotic fashion with his body bent down while we stroked the soft pearl grey head. It mesmerised him and comforted him and made him understand our love. And if we failed to calm him so, he would hang from the table by one leg, his great wings outstretched, screaming at the top of his voice, while Laddie danced below in savage glee, one eye on his master, one eye on the bird, ready to deal the fatal blow at the first sign of encouragement. We tried to teach the bird to say endless other words, and though he worked hard and practised all day long he never became a distinguished linguist, and the only noise he imitated to perfection was the opening

A Stranger in the Garden

and shutting of an ungreased, noisy window ! For gentleness of manner, in spite of all that Laddie says, no bird could have had a higher character ; he would let us pick him up and play with him, and he would fondle our hands and take our fingers between his beak, but he never once attempted to bite us. He was a beautiful bird, and we loved him, but truth will out, his screaming became unbearable and I'm bound to confess, with a certain feeling of shame and sorrow, that we gave that galar away ! At least we *lent* him to a friend, feeling certain that in his new home he would be loved so intensely that we should never see him more ; and from the moment of his departure the little dog heart revived, all his spirits returned, and he barked joyfully as he used to bark in the happy old days before the stranger came to disturb his peace. Once more he held undisputed sway, and even when a little white bundle was carried about in the garden and took up all the attention, he made up his great mind not to be jealous, for no pink and grey odious bird was concealed there, and that bundle betokened walks, and walks savoured of rabbits and every other forbidden joy.



TRESPASSERS WILL BE



PROSECUTED

“Among the links between man’s mind and Nature, we may place, as one of the most obvious, man’s earliest attempt to select, and group from her scattered varieties of form that which—at once a poem and a picture—forms, as it were, the decorated borderland between man’s home and Nature’s measureless domains.”

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED

THERE is a page in the visitors' book kept for the garden. Strangers come and go, for the residents have carried the news to the woods and fields, bearing record that there is naught to fear, and that all are sure of a welcome in the spot that breathes of peace. In many cases the news is true, but now and again Brer Rabbit ventures over the little wall, and though to his joy he finds a luscious breakfast ready spread out for him of a bed of young wallflowers, no welcome greets the intruder. Next morning he comes again, and war is declared. At dawn a window is softly lifted, and I peep out to reconnoitre, while the master of the garden and Laddie steal across the lawn, to intercept the foe. Feeling cross and chilly, I whisper words of command as I see from my citadel bunny's whereabouts in the rhododendron clumps; and the plot

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

thickens as I get shorter and shorter in my temper, seeing the Skye terrier in the maddest excitement careering off in the exact opposite direction to that indicated by the Commander-in-Chief. The rabbit laughs to himself in his refuge, and by a series of short charges gains his exit into the wood, while Laddie, in full cry, follows some mysterious scent to the rosary.

It may be, of course, that being a dog of such exceptional good manners, and versed in old-world courtesy, he would deem it inhospitable to treat a visitor roughly, or it may be that the perfume of roses appeals more to his heart. This was once my idea, but the theory has been long given up.

On a bright sunny summer morn, when all the world was glad, a baby rabbit, in search of a new sensation, and longing to see life, crept through the wire-netting, and found himself in the Garden of Peace. "This is bliss," he said to himself, as he nibbled up the seedling white brooms on the bank. "How right I was to take courage and disobey my parents. They are such stay-at-home folk ; one is nothing if not venturesome." Now it happened that at that moment a black nose appeared round the kalmias, and the little rabbit

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

thought it wiser to disappear as quickly as possible into a bed of golden yellow azalea. It was not a safe refuge to choose, for Laddie's eyes were sharp, and he saw the poor little visitor peeping over the flowers, and immediately barked and yelped as if he had found a whole army of rabbits, and meant to destroy them all. Off went the tiny bunny, and off went Laddie in hot pursuit, sometimes in the right direction, sometimes in the wrong, but baby brains are not equal to such awful emergencies, and presently, puffed up with pride, and with a look of supreme triumph bristling every hair, Laddie carried the poor little stranger into the middle of the lawn, and lay down panting, to watch the dying struggle of his victim. A little life so soon over; an ambition so early crushed! Just a little throbbing sigh, and a half lift of the long ears, and bunny was no more. Gently Laddie poked him with his nose, to see if all was over, then he looked up at his master, and wagged his tail, for the mighty deed was done, and at last his greatest ambition was reached—he had killed a rabbit! Nothing would induce him to leave his victim; he wanted to gloat over his victory; he wanted every passer-by to admire his skill and clever-

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

ness. To him a rabbit was a rabbit; he did not take into consideration that this one was only a few inches long. For a while we watched him lying there. He would answer to no call, and refused to budge. Presently we looked again. Laddie was playing with the little dead body. Soon the head had disappeared. "*Surely he is not going to eat the rabbit?*" I ventured to observe. It seemed such a rude way of treating a visitor. But there was no doubt about the matter, for next time I screwed up courage to look, a little furry tail was gradually disappearing down that black throat, and with a sigh Laddie stretched himself on the grass to meditate on his deed of death. It was an awful possibility to contemplate that fur and all had been swallowed.

Squirrels are more welcome visitors than the rabbits, for they are so fascinating, though they will sometimes feast on bulbs, and take the birds' food; still you cannot be angry with them—merry, giddy little clowns—for if they hear you coming to scold them, they will stand up on their hind legs, with a bushy tail erect, and look at you in a coaxing way, to challenge you to be angry, and then scamper off up the Spanish chestnut, and peep at you from

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

behind a bough. Sometimes they scrape on the lawn for roots, and will venture close up to the window, to see if, by good luck, the nut-hatches have left any nuts about. We pride ourselves on our hazel by the lily bed, and wonder when the nuts will be ripe for dessert, and just when we make up our minds to pick them, we find some one has saved us that trouble, for they all lie on the ground, with a little hole nibbled in each, and we say, angrily, "We must get rid of the squirrels," which means nothing, for we do not really grudge the nuts, and we should miss the merry little fellows if they really left us in peace.

Now and again a beautiful cock pheasant struts across the lawn, and stands dreaming under the mespilus trees. If he sees a face at the window, he does not trouble; nothing can hurt him here, and the sun shines on the metallic feathers, and the white ring dazzles round his neck, making the blackbirds envious as they pretend not to notice the stranger, while to hide their feelings, they sing louder and louder in the mountain-ash. Partridges, too, driven from the stubble, fly down and join the hens as they are being fed in the yard, and are glad of the shelter, for life is such a continual anxiety when once autumn dons

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

her crimson and gold robes, and though naturally hens are plebeian neighbours, corn is satisfactory when it can be eaten in peace, and anything in the shape of a dog is kept outside the stained paling.

But partridges were not the only visitors to the hen-house. One night cries of "murder" were heard, piercing screams for a moment, and then a great stillness. "Only a hen fallen off her perch in a nightmare," said a sleepy voice, but I doubted the statement; and next morning we found a poor mother lying dead and cold, surrounded by little fluffy corpses in a mutilated condition. "Who is the culprit?" we asked; and one said one thing and one another. All day we watched and wondered, but no answer came. At last Laddie barked, and looked south, so I instantly turned north, and saw a creature sneaking up the path to the summer-house. It was not a rabbit, and not a cat, and the like had never been seen in the Garden of Peace before. That night the hens cried for help again, and this time not in vain; revenge is sweet; a life for a life; a scrimmage and a few well-aimed blows, by the light of the stable-lantern, and a pole-cat ferret paid the penalty of a murderer.

I am afraid, as I chronicle the history of

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

this particular page in the visitors' book, that after all we did treat nearly all the strangers badly. Perhaps four-footed creatures do not appeal to our hearts as the birds do ; perhaps we loved our flowers over much, and could not bear them hurt. I planted two beautiful treasures on the rockery — dianthus William II. — and I watched with gentle care the green buds bursting, and the blood-red petals unfurl. Many times a day I wandered to the spot, for bright colours were shining in the sun, and the crimson pinks were to be such a contrast to the blue veronicas. One morning the crimson was missing ; some one had come and ruthlessly bitten through every stalk, and laid the flowers low. Is it silly to say there were tears in my eyes when I realised my loss, or shall I tell how the sun dazzled, and made me hold my kerchief for shade, as I crossed the rosary to tell my woes to an ever-sympathising listener ? We put a trap by William II., and that night an aged field-mouse ventured through to eat the remaining buds, and the block fell and killed him. The next night his wife followed him, and likewise died, and then three children, in duty bound, feeling that everything their parents did was right, crept through the

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

same wooden passage, and were squashed as flat as pancakes. So for their misdeeds a whole family suffered; but the pink could not bloom again till another year.

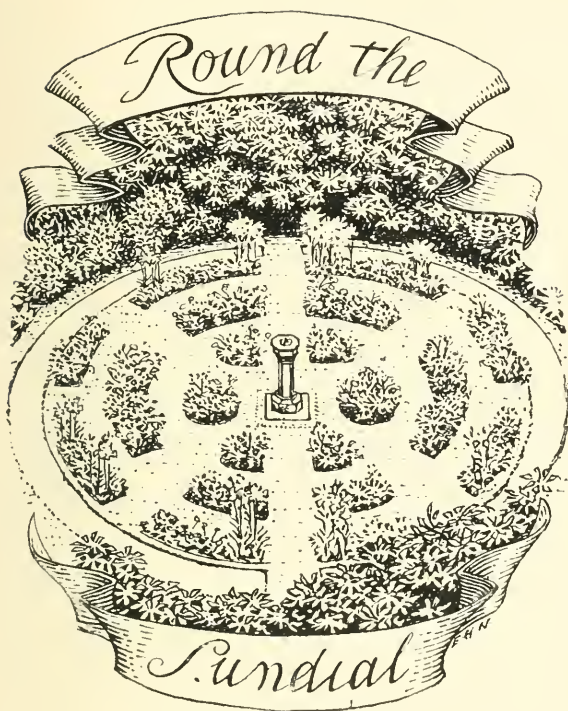
Rats, of course, we have in plenty, but we worry them, and they go for a time, only to return again to worry us. It is no good losing your temper with them; it is better to devise grand schemes for their destruction.

There is so much sadness to be encountered in gardening, so many trials to be borne, that after a while patience comes. Laddie once thought he would learn gardening, and used to dig up the borders, and sometimes when other little dogs came, they would all scratch the lawn together, for he had heard his master say he wanted to get rid of the moss. But Laddie so often chose the border where the seeds had just been sown, that at last we had to sternly protest, and more than once point the moral with a little cane; so he made up his mind not to help us any more, and to confine his gardening propensities to hiding his bones in a precious bed of Iceland poppies or under the scarlet tassels of sweet bergamot.

One day a stoat called, and danced such

Trespassers will be Prosecuted

antics on the lawn, that I was late for breakfast. He stood up on his hind legs like squggy, then pawed the air, and after bowing and scraping to his audience, turned a few St. Catherine's wheels, then up again to see who was admiring him. His long tail, with the black tip, moved gently as he capered about frightening all the mother birds into fits, and their alarm notes were sounded from tree to tree. I admired the little fellow intensely till a few hours later, when I went down to the wood and saw him just disappearing with a prize baby Langshan in his mouth. My sudden appearance made him drop his victim, and a little brandy and water soon brought the poor little gasping body back to life. It would not be courteous to be as inhospitable as Laddie is, but, after all, I am inclined to think visitors in the garden are a doubtful joy.



“If I am to have a system at all, give me the good old system of terraces and angled walks, and cleft yew hedges, against whose dark and rich verdure the bright old-fashioned flowers glittered in the sun.”

“THE CARTHUSIAN.”

ROUND THE SUN-DIAL

IN every garden there should be a part which can be called the wilderness, where Nature rambles at will, and pruning scissors rust. For it is a rest at times to turn to the tangle and natural grouping of flowers growing unchecked and unhidden in a vagrant mode of existence.

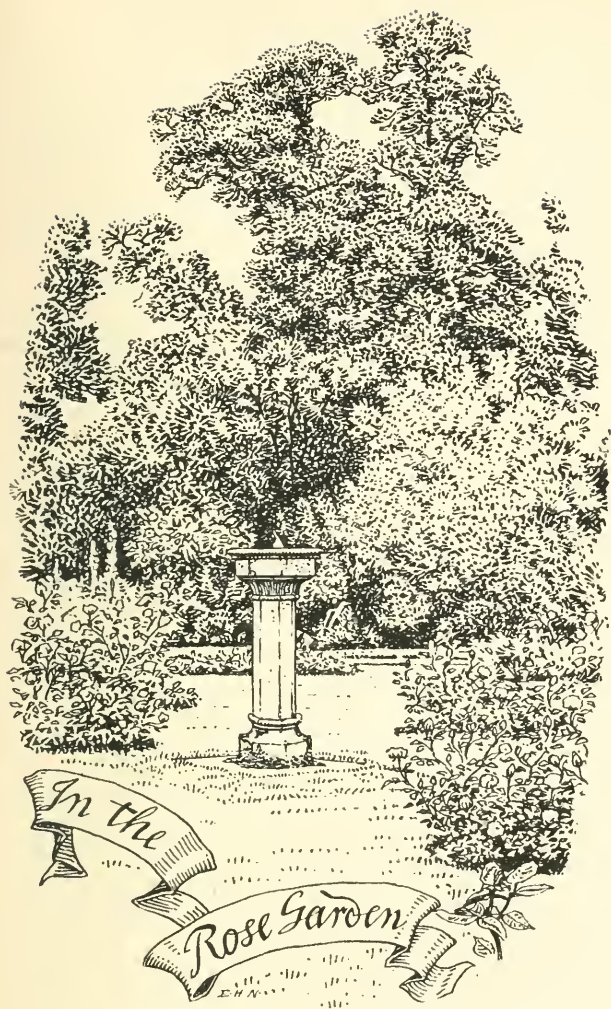
But with all one's love for Nature no garden is perfect without the formal part: beds laid out in geometrical design carefully and artistically modelled. We know of the war of words raging on both sides, but the formal garden and the natural garden are both right, for they are both needed.

In the Garden of Peace the rosary is in formal design and pleases the eye as we pass from the verandah under the green arch. It is circular, with different shaped beds, as seen in the picture round the sundial. Every formal garden is bound to have a centre, for there must be circles in

Round the Sun-dial

the form whether perceived or not. Then to border it there must be strong lines, either a wall, a yewen hedge, a sweet-briar hedge, or a belt of shrub, so that the eye may not wander abroad but revolve round the centre of the design. We know that the word "garden" means an enclosed space, "a garth or yard surrounded by walls, as opposed to unenclosed fields and woods." Here is the foundation of the plea for a formal garden. A lawn sloping into a field is not a garden at all; though I must own that one of the prettiest gardens I have ever seen runs into the heather. The reason for the formal garden is that it should follow the lines of the house, so as to form a harmonious whole and not make the building appear unfurnished without. An old walled garden denotes privacy and shelter, for wind is a fatal enemy to flowers, and straight turf walks with wide herbaceous borders each side make a dream of flowers—if judiciously planted—all the year round.

"The sweet muske rose, double and single the double and single white rose, the fair and sweet scenting woodbine; purple cowslips and double cowslips; primrose, double and single; the violet, nothing behind the best for smelling sweetly, and a thousand



Round the Sun-dial

more will provoke your content, and all these by the skill of your gardener so comely and orderly placed in your borders and squares."

One loves to read of "comely borders to the beds" in the old kitchen gardens, "with roses, lavender, and the like," for I feel the old world garden appealed more to order and wealth of colour than the Nature gardens of to-day. We want the straight lines of a pergola, and a terrace wall, a wrought-iron gate and a flight of steps to lead the eye to the flower borders and to show where Art meets her sister Nature. A formal garden does not mean "bedding out," just a series of moons and stars cut in the lawn turf and filled with calceolarias, blue lobelia and red geraniums, or a square of beds in marvellous design with different coloured stone paths, or, shall we say, cockle-shell edging! "Are we," says Mr. Blomfield, "in laying out our gardens to ignore the house, and to reproduce Nature to the best of our ability in the garden? Or are we to treat the house and garden as inseparable factors of one homogeneous whole, which are to co-operate for one premeditated result?" Of course the two may blend, and I would always have flowers near the house, sweet-

Round the Sun-dial

smelling flowers, rosemary and monthly roses, honeysuckle and jasmine clinging to the window ; lavender and tobacco, sweet verbenas and myrtle, balm of Gilead and sweet bergamot, with mignonette flung in between : so that when you stand gossiping under the window with a lingering guest he may stoop and pluck a fragrant sprig and carry it away thinking all the while what a sweet garden yours is.

I think that a rosary should always be in formal design, for dwarf roses themselves will always prevent it from being inartistic, and they seem to belong to the sun-dial and to flourish best when set apart alone. Yet roses are unaffected by the sun-dial, for as the shadow passes round the bronze plate they never open and shut in answer to the time of day. *Eschscholzia* only open when the sun shines on them, and in despair close their leaves when the shadow falls. Instead of bursting their buds they push off little green night-caps, to the delight of children, and throw up long pointed seeds twice the length of the flower. Evening primroses stand like a yellow army at the back of the rockery and will not face the glare of day but open at eventide to keep company with tobacco blooms, which will not even show a glimpse of their white

Round the Sun-dial

star faces till the sun is near setting. We know that "the pimpernel dozed in the lea" while the "lilies and roses were all awake" as the poet's flower song to Maud tells us. We wondered in our childhood why the daisies would close their petals and the convolvulus go to sleep at night, unlike other flowers. This different character of flowers is very curious and the shrinking leaf of the sensitive plant still fascinates me whenever, to my delight, I touch it. My rockery, where the evening primroses grow, is near the rosary, and furnishes bright spots of colour all the year round.

While pulling away some tangle of blue periwinkle, I saw under a slab of iron-stone, two little bright bead eyes looking at me in an entreating way as if to bid me to be careful and not to disarrange his shelter, and I highly commended Mr. Redbreast for having chosen such a safe warm home. While watching the robin, I heard a peculiar low gurgling sound from a bush hard by, scarcely audible even at a distance of three yards, which would probably not have attracted my attention had it not been that every now and then the gurgle changed to a loud shake and then again sank to the low gurgle. It was the lesser whitethroat making his voyage

Round the Sun-dial

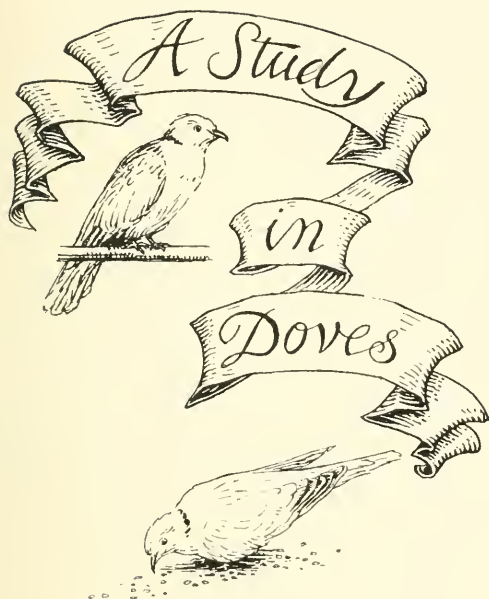
of discovery round our demesne, singing here and there as he went. He comes into our garden many times a day just to see what we are all about, but he never chooses one particular tree or bush for his song like the other birds do. Gilbert White tells us how this little bird "runs up the stems of the crown imperials, and putting its head into the bells of those flowers, sips the liquor which stands in the nectarium of each petal. Sometimes it feeds on the ground like the hedge-sparrow, by hopping about on the grass plots and mown walks."

Among the branches of the spiræas, the lesser whitethroat's first cousin, the garden-warbler, sings lustily in his rich contralto voice, hurrying on with his song as if afraid he would not have time to sing out his say before the shadow fades on the dial, and the sun sinks to rest. He is often confounded with the blackcap, but he sings without rhythm or metre, whereas the blackcap, as is well known, excels in both.

There is no formality about the birds who sing in the rosary, geometrical design has no charm for them. A sun-dial makes a pleasant stage for a solo, but that is all that is taken into account. Folks may

Round the Sun-dial

disagree as to arrangement but after all as long as we have flowers and birds, and our garden contents us, why should we break our hearts over our neighbours' view of the subject ?



*“ Could we forbear dispute, and practise love,
We should agree as angels do above.”*

EDMUND WALLER.

A STUDY IN DOVES

ONE day in spring-time, in a dream garden, we saw a flight of little Egyptian doves fly down on to a turf-walk in the heather in answer to a soft whistle from their mistress. They had been carefully acclimatised and fed twice a day, and in return had built in the garden and reared endless young in the pine-trees bordering the lawn. It was the collared turtle-dove (*Columbia risoria*), a little soft grey bird, with the black crescent at the back of the neck. Our garden cannot be complete without these doves, we thought to ourselves, so we watched and waited until we found some. Already the English turtle-dove and wood-pigeon had nests in the trees on the lawn, but there was room for the strangers too. "This bird has," writes Wood, "from classic time until the present day, been conventionally accepted as a type of matrimonial perfection, loving but its mate and caring for no other until death

A Study in Doves

steps in to part the wedded couple." The doves came at last to the Garden of Peace from a bazaar. It was not an Egyptian bazaar, but a sale, held at a Cripples' Home.

The ideal dove was the turtle-dove of the psalmist, and it is but natural to think that the shepherd lad had leisure to note their habits and ways. Their presence, therefore, in the garden must add to the charm and peace. Two pairs were purchased, and so eager were they for a home that one forthwith laid an egg in the railway-carriage, showing absolute trust and superiority of environment. They insisted, too, on cooing the whole journey long in the luggage-rack, to the embarrassment of their owners and to the annoyance of other passengers. Once at home they were put in cages, and peace reigned after the two pair were supplied with nests of hay, and the white, round eggs were laid and sat upon for a fortnight. All this time they were still ideal doves—doves of fiction and poetry. At last the eggs in one cage were hatched and two hideous goblin birdlets, baffling all description, emerged into existence. The other doves sat on patiently day after day, and apparently would have continued contentedly sitting for an un-

A Study in Doves

known period with no result, but thinking it a thankless task they were let out of the cage and presented with the freedom of the garden. Instantly the first trait in the real dove betrayed itself. Just to annoy their fellows they flew down on to the other cage and tried to peck the inmates, who were spending their days in feeding their young in the disgusting manner peculiar to doves. Alas! the free, happy life of the little visitors was cut short by a cruel sparrowhawk, who swept through the branches of the snowy mespilus and pounced on to the soft grey back of one of the pair, inflicting a terrible wound. There was a cloud of white down and a scream from the house, but it was too late to save the pet, and after a day of lingering, helpless pain the little life died out with a weary sigh. "The poor widowed mate will surely mope and die," we said pathetically, with the vision of the ideal dove before our eyes, and our hearts bled for the loneliness and isolation of the little bird's broken heart. But pity was wasted, for the dove seemed as happy as ever, ate rather more than usual, and flew about merrily. In due course of time the morning dawned when, thinking the little ones in the wicker-cage were old enough to take care of themselves, the parent-birds

A Study in Doves

were let out. Instantly, without a moment's consideration or a single prick of conscience, the widowed dove eloped with his neighbour's wife into the Wellingtonia. This was an awful moment, for the theory of the ideal dove was a hard one to kill. "She will surely come back," I whispered, with a ring of doubt in my voice. But, instead of coming back, she seemed to enjoy the situation immensely, and in a brazen way the shameless couple began to build a nest in the roses on the verandah, in full view of the discarded husband. He was put back into the cage, with his two children to console him, and never missed his wife in the slightest degree, but stored up a mighty vengeance in his heart as he cooed pleasantly and showed no loss of appetite. The disgraceful couple in the roses meanwhile built an unsafe nest, and showed but little talent for architecture. They would carry a big bit of thick stick up to the trellis, and then let it hopelessly drop, and afterwards triumphantly land a twig the size of a match, to be cooed over and aimlessly laid one way and then another with no method in the madness, or carefully devised plan. Soon they gave up the task of an ideal nest as hopeless, and laid their two eggs on a few loose twigs, and then

A Study in Doves

finding it unsafe added a few more little sticks in a careless, haphazard manner, flouting their scandalous behaviour unblushingly before the public.

Peace reigned until the wicker door of the cage was re-opened one morning and the three captives let loose. Then the ideal dove, all gentleness and sweetness redolent of rest and peace, the ideal dove we had cherished so tenderly in our imagination, was banished for ever. An awful scene ensued. The husband discovered his renegade wife on her nest in the bower of roses and beat her off with his wings, flying with her into the portugal laurel to fight desperately. Feathers flew in all directions, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they were separated. Then the two cock birds, catching sight of one another and thirsting for blood, met in the mountain-ash, and beat each other madly with their wings until they were a sorry sight to behold. They in their turn were duly separated, and all three miserable combatants drooped their bruised wings and shut their eyes and fluffed up their feathers, nursing their wrongs, and cherishing every possible evil thought in their bird-hearts. They rested for awhile, until one of the young doves flew up to ask

A Study in Doves

what all this fuss was about, and he was pecked violently on the head by his father for his pains, and was only rescued from a tragic death by a rush from the window. The two young ones were then put back into the cage, and the problem at once presented itself to the owners as to which of the three old ones was to return to captivity, for all doves look alike, and after the fray their identity was lost. "We will see who fights who," we said, "that will be the only test." Alas! for the ideal dove! One old one was captured, and put into the cage, and instantly pecked the young ones. He was removed as unfatherlike. Another was placed in the roses, and she hopped quietly into her nest, and was therefore pronounced to be the runaway wife. The third was restored to the cage, and both the sucking-doves stuffed their long beaks down the parental throat. Then we breathed again; peace was for the moment restored. You may still write in poetical language about the ideal dove, but there never was such a scene of rage and jealousy witnessed in the Garden of Peace until the doves came. But then they were the real doves, not the "harmless doves" we are bidden to imitate



*“ The flowers of spring may wither, the hope of
summer fade,
The autumn droop in winter, the birds for-
sake the shade ;
The winds be lulled, the sun and moon forget
their old decree,
But we, in Nature’s latest hour, O Lord, will
cling to Thee ! ”*

BISHOP HEBER.

L'ENVOI

“Light and shade by turn, but Love always.”

* * * * *

WITH the sun-dial's story ringing in our ears a song comes wafting on the wind, and we wonder where we first heard it. Perhaps in our hearts, or was it a bird's song writ in words? or only just an expression of our lives like the blossom of a rose. Only it must have been written where the lilies grow in answer to a question which only the butterflies heard.

This is the song which made even the throstle silent for a while

“Will you wander up the pathway
In the sunny side of love?
Will you live among the flowers
With the blue sky up above?
Ever reaching out for blessing,
Ever trusting, ever bright?”
And she answered in the sunshine,
“*I am with you in the light.*”

L'Envoi

“Through the sunshine to the shadow,
Will you linger by my side?
If the path be rough and stony,
Will you faithful still abide?
Bravely bear and bear together,
So the burden light be made?”
And she answered in the twilight,
“I am with you in the shade.”

“In the afterglow of living
Will you rest, love, with me there?
All the pain and all the pleasure
Lost in lives of answered prayer:
Waiting for the summons, darling,
To the Home beyond the sky?”
And she answered in her patience,
“I am with you till I die.”

* * * * *

There was a hush. Then the birds took up the refrain and it was echoed from every tree and shrub. The flowers opened their petals to listen and the bees came humming, forgetting the honey for a moment in their enchantment at the song. Even the butterflies fluttered round the sun-dial to see the time of day and were caught by the artist for his picture.

There could be no record of the Garden of Peace without the pictures, for words might not carry the home beyond the little circle, or accurately show the nut-hatches carrying nuts and the tomtits' acrobatic

L'Envoi

feats. It was a subject to be treated tenderly, but then an artist can only treat scenes tenderly when Nature guides the pen. So the artist came and listened to the birds while he worked in the Garden of Peace, and he watched the giant poppies open and shut in the sun, and the white sweet peas' gentle blossoms. "All great Art is praise," says Ruskin, and an artist's office "seems to be that of interpreter and mediator between Nature and man his eye can see deeper, his ear hear more, his heart is sooner thrilled, his sympathies are more attuned, his mind receives physical impressions more directly than other men."

And of the garden where our birds live I would have you know the story, for we treasure the flowers as living jewels and no bud opens without our knowledge. We were utterly ignorant as to garden craft and jardinage when we came, but with love for a teacher and experience for a guide, our knowledge has grown and our toil has been tenderly rewarded.

Gardening at first was a dream, and but fancied play. "Our garden shall be full of surprises," we said to one another in the cold spring-time when we entered into possession, and when the white coverlet of

L'Envoi

snow was lifted which came to purify our advent. "We will plant a group of Japanese anemones here on the bank and they shall lift their white heads against these green bushes."

So we scraped a hole in the mossy turf and thrust the roots in, fancying in our ignorance that they would answer to our wish. "Spikes of red gladioli shall rear their proud heads by the birch tree;" so I remember the bulbs were planted regardless of soil, regardless of moisture. And our man, who we thought must be a master hand because he was handy, and glad to do everything which was not his work, he added to our discomfiture for he seemed to think that plants flourished best in a bed of stones and answered to our doubts in a cheerful reassuring manner, "Lor bless you, mum, them'll grow in anything," and when questioned as to roots, the invariable reply, "It's one of them yaller things," caused us no uneasiness, so trustful is absolute ignorance. Afterwards when the flowers failed to appear, and sternly we inquired the reason why and wherefore, "I can't say, I'm sure," accompanied by a pleasing grin, was hardly recompense for the loss.

"A garden is a place for flowers, a place

L'Envoi

where one may foster a passion for loveliness, may learn the magic of colour and the glory of form, and quicken sympathy with Nature in her higher moods."

This was our feeling as we gently pruned the tangled shrubs and mourned over every vagrant branch which we tenderly cut away. "It must be an artistic garden," we said, "do not let us trim ruthlessly, or be prosaic in our arrangement, let Nature triumph, let the garden be an idealisation of Nature, a dream of flowers, a world of colour." Tears of disappointment have watered the ground long since, but we have conquered by love and knowledge.

"Nor rural sight alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit and restore
The tone of languid Nature."

The hum of bees on a hot July afternoon, the tick of the wasps in the old timber, the grasshopper in the grass chirping to his mate, all add to the infinite charm, and each season that passes brings a fresh joy, a new glory, a more perfect calm.

In the spring-time — when nesting is going on and the migrants are just arriving — it is always a forget-me-not

L'Envoi

garden, little waves of blue reflecting the sky in every corner, with red tulips peeping up between to accentuate old Crome's touch of red ; tubs of the same are found in odd corners, and rows of sapphire scillas lead to the porch, where the door of the home stands ever wide open to speak a welcome to the wayfarer. Wall-flowers in all shades of copper and gold scent the air and the blue anemones on the rockery come into bloom.

In the summer "everywhere are roses, roses," for at last we have coaxed them to grow and blossom profusely. Having shown them how we love and cherish them by expelling the stones and sand, and by bringing rich luscious loam from a distance of twelve miles, they could do naught else but repay us by a sacrifice of life in bloom. And the lilies come with the roses—old-fashioned white madonna lilies—shining in groups against the green.

Perhaps after all autumn possesses the greater charm in the Garden of Peace, yet how could that be when spring and summer are so perfect ? When the mespilus trees on the lawn and bank turn crimson, and the silver birch hangs soft yellow plumes from every branch, when the big beech by the little gate is a shining bronze, and the

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spiræas red, when barberries flaunt their orange fruit, and the tawny brown of oaks contrast with the blue firwoods, and the clouds make glorious lights and shadows, it is the time to stand and wonder, and to say breathlessly, as the brown waves of bracken bend to the breeze, "Surely this is the season that I love best."

And for winter? Ah! it is never winter in the Garden of Peace, that is, if the word winter carries with it an idea of bareness, bleakness, and barrenness; for the sun shines, and the conifers are ever green, the banks of rhododendrons are the same as in summer-time, and birds come in countless numbers to be fed. It is sheltered, too, from the rough blast as we stand in the little verandah; a sun-trap indeed! Also the woods are turned into fairyland when the world is white and still, when rime encrusts each twig and spray, and crystal dust glints in the sun.

Each season is an artist's study, a poet's theme, a musician's song; the influence of sweet perfumes pervades the air and we wonder at those who long for the rush and din of the city.

Perhaps it is the *sympathy* of a garden with every passing mood that endears it to the heart of those who foster a passion for

L'Envoi

flowers and their environment. "Love of beauty has a way of enticing beauty," careful culture rewards the labour a hundredfold.

There is no stage in life's history—be the veil lifted or no—with its pleasure and pain, sunshine and shadow which is not lovingly reflected in the mirror of Nature. And why? Because Nature is a link between God and man.

"If life smile on thee
And thou find all to thy mind,"

perchance groups of many-coloured Shirley poppies answer to your mood, towering sunflowers golden in the sun, or haply a row of sweet peas waiting to be culled. When in a sober, thoughtful frame, we may linger where the rosemary grows, or stand and ponder by the "sweet border" and pick a clove carnation and a sprig of mignonette. Sometimes, when sorrow clouds hang heavy, pure Madonna lilies cheer the heart, and the white acacia tresses against the deep blue sky carry our thoughts heavenwards; and at times when tired out by life's petty worries, surely the calm of the garden can never fail to soothe and refresh.

L'Envoi

Sweet memories are brought to mind by a single violet or primrose, some hope renewed by the scent of a sweet-briar hedge ; in the kitchen garden a rosy apple or clinging vine recall a merry adventure of youth ; a twig of " old man " brings a grandsire's story back again. Say, is there not an untold sympathy in our hearts with Nature ? If our communion with birds and flowers be perfect, it is because we love with a great true love the birds' Garden of Peace.

*

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*

These are pages culled from the story of the years spent in the Garden of Peace. The story that the sun-dial tells in the rosary where all the world is fair. We have learnt so many lessons in these years, lessons of trust from the birds, lessons of praise from the flowers.

Whilst plucking a rose to pieces with baby hands, the " heir of all the ages " looks with his great brown eyes into the future across the valley, and those watching him wonder what problems of life and work are waiting to be given him to solve, what part in the world's history will be his to unravel and fulfil.

L'Envoi

Then the nut-hatches call and Laddie
barks, and down we come to earth and
wonder why folk say it is only a workaday
world when it is nothing but a song to us.
Baby hands catch at the sunbeams and
teach us to catch them too.

*Oh ! flowers, carry a message,
Oh ! bells waft a word,
Oh ! sunshine brighten my greeting,
Oh ! stars if you heard
Join in the love I would send you
On wings of a bird.*

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Rustic and homely to the town-bred ear?
Meet but for gossip of the village green,
Passion, where'er she works, is never mean.*

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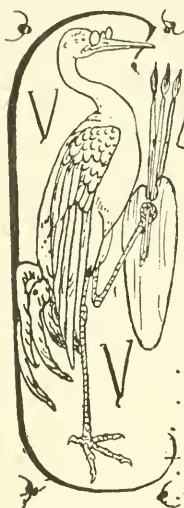
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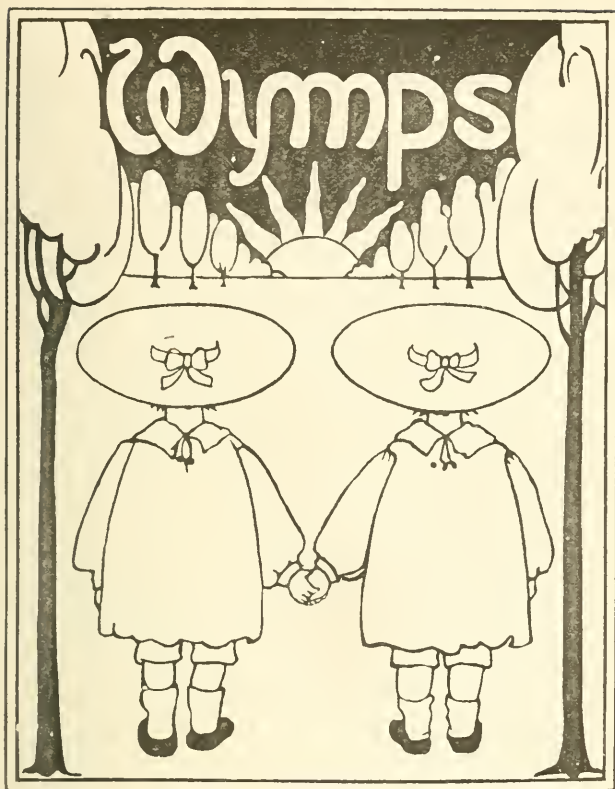
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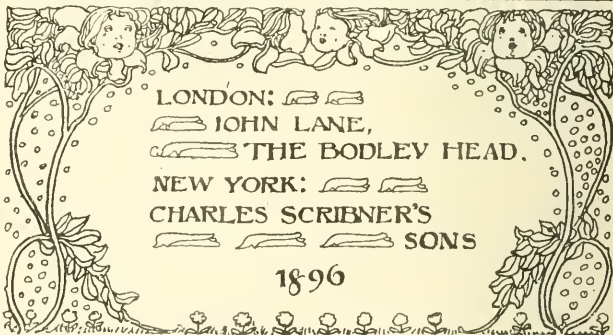
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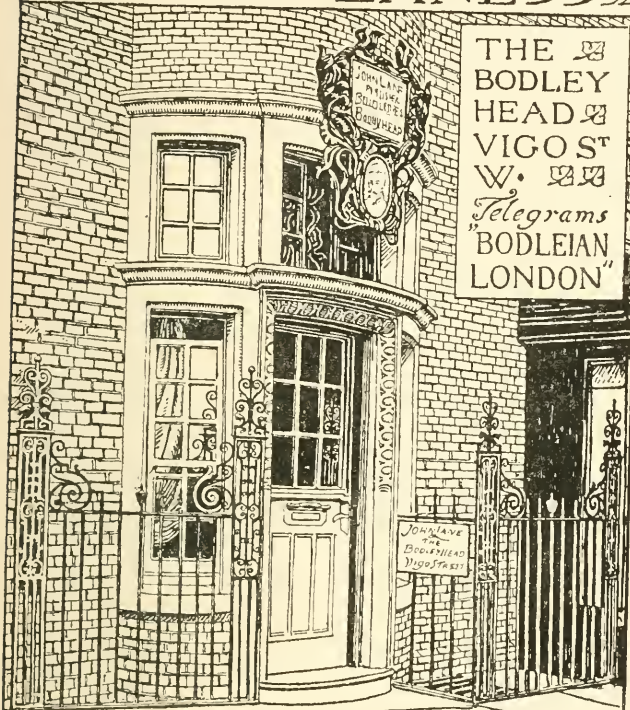
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